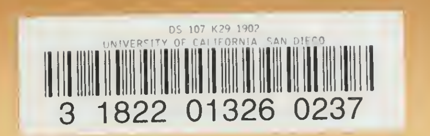




THE·HOLY·LAND PAINTED·BY·JOHN FVLLEYLOVE DESCRIBED·BY JOHN·KELMAN

MDCCCCII.


DS 107 K29 1902
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
3 1822 01326 0237





THE HOLY LAND







JERUSALEM FROM THE TRADITIONAL SPOT ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES WHERE CHRIST WEPT OVER THE CITY

The foreground to the left is part of the garden in front of the Franciscan Chapel. The woman with the water-jar resting on the wall is looking over the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Kidron), which parts the Mount of Olives from the mountain on which Jerusalem stands. The Eastern Wall of the City, from the south-eastern corner to the Golden Gate, stretches across the middle of the picture. Above the wall to the left rises the Mosque of El Aksa, and to the right the Dome of the Rock, standing free on its platform, which is the highest level of the Haram Area. Behind the Dome of the Rock, and to the right of it, are the Domes of the Holy Sepulchre. The towers on the horizon to the left are those of the Citadel of David. Through the cypresses to the left of the picture may be seen part of the village of Siloam.

The side of the hill across the valley of the Kidron, opposite Siloam, is part of the Hill of Ophel, the southern spur of the mountain on which Jerusalem stands. The farther valley beyond the Hill of Ophel is the Vale of Hinnom. Coming to the extreme right of the picture below, we see two cypresses of the Garden of Gethsemane.

The spot where the heart of the late Marquess of Bute was interred, in accordance with the terms of his will, lies within a few feet of the cypresses to the left of the picture.



THE HOLY LAND

PAINTED BY

JOHN FULLEYLOVE, R.I.

DESCRIBED BY

JOHN KELMAN, M.A.

LONDON

ADAM & CHARLES BLACK

1902



Preface

THE secrets of satisfactory travel are mainly two—to have certain questions ready to ask; and to detach oneself from preconceptions, so as to find not what one expects, or desires to find, but what is there. These rules I endeavoured to follow while in the Holy Land. As to this book, I have tried to write it "with my eye on the object"—to describe things as they were seen, and to see them again while describing them. The extent to which this ideal has been reached, or missed, will be the measure of the book's success or failure.

No attempt has been made to add anything original to the scientific knowledge of Palestine. For that task I am not qualified either by sufficient travel or by expert study of the subject. On the other hand, this is not merely an itinerary, or journal of experiences and adventures of the road. I have freely introduced notes from my journal in illustration of characteristics of the country and its life, and have claimed the privilege of

digressing in various directions. But the main object has been to give a record of impressions rather than of incidents.

These impressions are arranged in three parts, as they bear upon the geography, the history, and the spirit of Syria. They have been corrected and amplified by as wide reading as the short time at my disposal allowed. A few of the books read or consulted are referred to in footnotes, but many others have helped me. To append a list of them to so small a contribution to the subject as this, would be but to remind the reader of the old fable, *Nascetur ridiculus mus.* I must, however, acknowledge with much gratitude my obligation to two volumes above all others—Major (now Colonel) Conder's *Tent Work in Palestine*, and Professor George Adam Smith's *Historical Geography of the Holy Land.* To these every chapter is indebted more or less, some chapters very deeply. Among the pleasures which this task has brought with it, none is greater than the intimate acquaintance with these two works which it entailed.

With Professor Smith I have a more personal bond of obligation than the invaluable help I have had from his book. Last year we rode and camped together from Hebron to Damascus, back over the eastern spurs of Hermon to the coast, and north by Tyre and Sidon to Beyrout. All who were in that

party know, as no words can express, how much insight and suggestion we owed to the leader who interpreted the land for us so brilliantly and with such kindness. For my own part I feel that at times it has been difficult to distinguish between impressions of my own and those which have been unconsciously borrowed from him. If I have borrowed freely, I am sure he will allow me to count that among the many privileges of our long acquaintance, and as a token of my admiration for his genius and gratitude for his friendship.

JOHN KELMAN.

Edinburgh, 1902.



Contents

PART I.—THE LAND

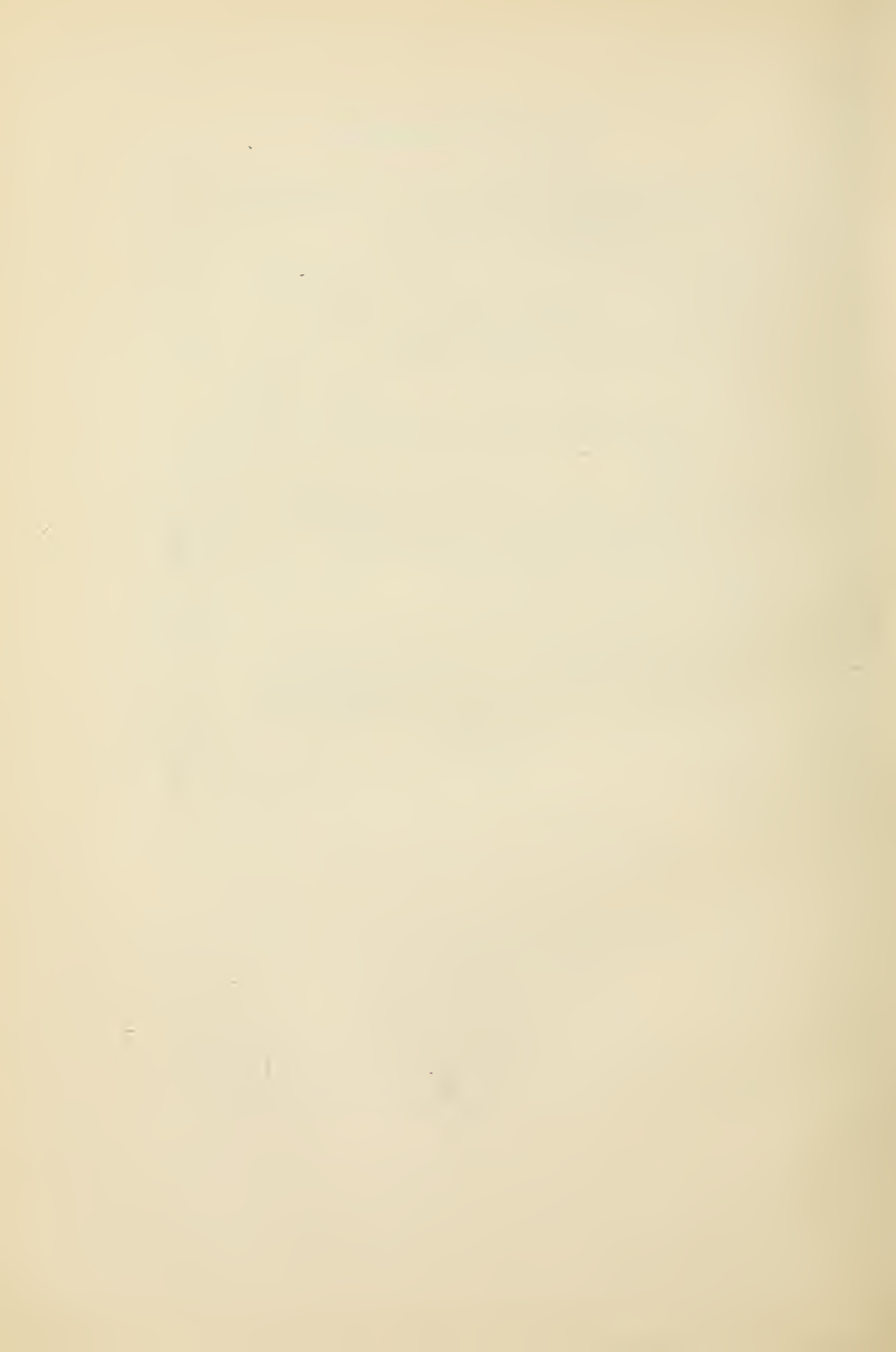
PART II.—THE INVADERS

PART III.—THE SPIRIT OF SYRIA

List of Illustrations

The Descriptions accompanying the Illustrations are reprinted by permission from the Catalogue of the original pictures in water-colour by Mr. Fulleylove, exhibited in London in the spring of 1902.

List of Illustrations



PART I

THE LAND



A JOURNEY through the Holy Land may reasonably be expected to be in some sort a sacramental event in a man's life. Spiritual things are very near us, and we feel that we have a heritage in them ; yet they constantly elude us, and need help from the senses to make them real and commanding. Such sacramental help must surely be given by anything that brings vividly to our realisation those scenes and that life in the midst of which the Word was made flesh. The more clearly we can gain the impression of places and events in Syria, the more reasonable and convincing will Christian faith become.

Everything which revives the long past has power to quicken the imagination, and site-hunters and relic-hunters in any field have much to say for themselves. Now, apart altogether from the Christian story, Syria has the spell of a very ancient land. The mounds that break the level on the plain of Esdraelon represent six hundred years of buried history for every thirty feet of their height. Among the first objects pointed out to us in Palestine was a perforated stone which serves now as ventilator for a Christian meeting-house in Lebanon, but which was formerly a section of Zenobia's

aqueduct. In Syria the realisation of the past is continual, and the centuries mingle in a solemn confusion. Its modern life seems of little account, and is in no way the rival of the ancient. In London, or even in Rome, the new world jostles the old ; in Palestine the old is so supreme as to seem hardly conscious of the new.

All this reaches its keenest point in connection with men's worship; and what a long succession of worshippers have left their traces here! The primitive rock-hewn altar, the Jewish synagogue, the Greek temple, the Christian church, the Mohammedan mosque —all have stood in their turn on the same site. His must be a dull soul surely who can feel no sympathy with the Moslem, or even with the heathen worship. These religions too had human hearts beating in them, and wistful souls trying by their help to search eternity. To the wise these dead faiths are full of meaning. Through all their clashing voices there sounds the cry of man to his God—a cry more often heard and answered than we in our self-complacency are sometimes apt to think.

The sacramental quality of the Holy Land is of course felt most by those who seek especially for memories and realisations of Jesus Christ. Within the pale of Christianity there are several different ways of regarding the land as holy, and most of them lead to disappointment. The Greek and Roman Catholic Churches vie with one another in their passion for sites and relics there, and seem to lose all sense of the dis-

tinction between the sublime and the grotesque in their eagerness for identifications. A Protestant counterpart to this mistaken zeal is that of the huntsmen of the fields of prophecy, who cannot see a bat fluttering about a ruin or a mole turning up the earth without turning ecstatically to Hebrew prophetic books,—as if these were not the habits of bats and moles all the world over. Apart from either of these, there are others less orthodox but equally superstitious who have some vague notion of occult and magic qualities which differentiate this from all other regions of the earth. Benjamin Disraeli and Pierre Loti are representatives of this point of view. The former is persuaded that the land "must be endowed with marvellous and peculiar qualities"; and the hero of his *Tancred* seeks and finds there supernatural communications from the unseen world. The latter tells in his *Jérusalem* how he went to Palestine with the hope that some experience might be given him which would revive his lost faith in Christianity. He returned, a disappointed sentimentalist. The saddening and yet fascinating narrative reaches its climax in Gethsemane, where, beating his brow in the darkness against an olive tree, he waited (as he himself confesses) for he knows not what. His words are: "Non, rien : personne ne me voit, personne ne m'écoute, personne ne me répond."

The belief in miracle is always difficult: nowhere is it so difficult as on the traditional site. The earth is just earth there as elsewhere; and the sky seems almost farther above it. The rock is solid rock; the water,

air, trees, hills are uncompromising terrestrial realities. It is wiser to abandon the attempt at forcing the supernatural to reveal itself, and to turn to the human side of things as the surest way of ultimately arriving at the divine. When that has been deliberately done the reward is indeed magnificent. An unexpected and overwhelming sense of reality comes upon the sacred narrative. These places and the life that inhabited them are actualities, and not merely items in an ancient book or the poetic background of a religious experience. More particularly when you look upward to the hills, you find that your help still cometh from them. Their great sky-lines are unchanged, and the long vistas and clear-cut edges which you see are the same which filled the eyes of prophets and apostles, and of Jesus Christ Himself.

It is this, especially as it regards the Saviour of mankind, that is the most precious gain of Syrian travel. Now and again it comes on one with overpowering force. Sailing up the coast, this impression haunted the long hours. As we gazed on the mountains, and the image of them sank deeper and deeper, the thought grew clear in all its wonder that somewhere among these heights He had wandered with His disciples, and sat down by the sides of wells to rest. In camp at Jericho we were confronted by an uncouth, blunt-topped mountain mass, thrusting itself aggressively up on the Judean side, in itself a very rugged and memorable mountain-edge. Not till the light was fading, and the bold outline struck blacker and blacker



THE MOUNT OF TEMPTATION FROM JERICHO

The Mount of Temptation, called also Quarantana, is one of the spurs of the mountains which overlook the deep valley of the Jordan on its western side. The central peak is the traditional site of the Temptation of Christ, who is said to have spent the forty days' fast in one of the caves in the mountain-side, over which a chapel has been built.

The Spring which Elisha cured of its bitterness by salt lies at the foot.

Jericho, from its sheltered position in the Jordan valley, at a depth of more than a thousand feet below the Mediterranean, has a luxuriant semi-tropical vegetation, but the trees shewn in the foreground are apricots and poplars. Time, sunrise.





against the sky, did the fact suddenly surprise us that this was Quarantana, the Mountain of Temptation. Then we understood that wilderness story in all its unprotected loneliness, and we almost saw the form of the Son of Man.

Thus, as day after day he rides through the country, the traveller finds new meaning in the words, "I have glorified Thee *on the earth.*" An inexpressible sense possesses him of the reality of Jesus Christ. These pathways were, indeed, once trodden by His feet; through these valleys He carried the lamp of life; under these stars He prayed; through this sunshine He lay in a rock-hewn grave. To a man's dying day he will be nearer Christ for this. The chief sorrow of the Christian life for most of us is the difficulty of realisation. At times we have all had to flog up our imagination to the "realising sense" of Christ. After this journey that necessity is gone. It is almost as if in long past years we had seen Him there, and heard Him speak. The divine mystery of Christ is all the more commanding when the human fact of Jesus has become almost a memory rather than a belief.





STUDIES OF SYRIAN PEASANT WOMEN





CHAPTER I

THE COLOUR OF THE LAND

Every land has a scheme of colour of its own, and while form and outline are the first, they are not the most permanent nor the deepest impressions which a region makes upon its travellers. It is the colour of the land which slowly and almost unconsciously sinks in upon the beholder day by day. We observe the outlines of a scene; we remember its colouring.

This is especially true of Palestine. Nothing about it is more distinctive than its colour-scheme; and nothing is perhaps less familiar to those who have not actually seen it. Syria may be treated as if it were Italy, or even Egypt—in hard intense colouring; or it may be treated as if it were England, in strong tones but with a certain homely softening of edge. Neither of these modes is true to Syria. Its edge-lines are sharp, but they are traced in such faint shades as to produce an effect very difficult either to reproduce or to describe, and yet impossible to forget.

The colours are manifold, and they vary considerably with the seasons of the year. Yet the bare hill-sides

(which form the greater masses of colour in most landscapes), the desert, and the distant mountain ranges, are ever the same. Most travellers make their first acquaintance with Palestine in Judea, entering it from Jaffa. When the plains are behind you, and you are in among the valleys up which the road climbs to Jerusalem, you at once recognise the fact that a new and surprising world of colour has been entered. In the valley-bottom there may be but a dry watercourse, or perhaps a rusty strip of cultivated land ; but above you there is sure to be the outcrop of white and grey limestone. In some places it appears in characterless and irregular blotches whose grotesque intrusion seems to confuse and caricature the mountain side. This is, however, only occasional, and the usual and characteristic appearance is that of long and flowing lines of striation which generally follow pretty closely the curve of the sky-line. The colours of these strata are many. You have rich brown bands, dark red, purple, yellow, and black ones ; but these are toned down by the dominant grey of the broader bands, and the general effect is an indistinct grey with a bluish tinge, to which the coloured bands give a curiously artificial and decorative appearance. As a work of Art Judea is most interesting ; as part of Nature it is almost incredible.

In the northern district, near Bethel, everything yields to stone, and the brighter colours disappear. The mountain slopes shew great naked ribs and bars —the gigantic stairs of Jacob's dream. On the heights your horse slips and picks his way over long stretches of



BETHEL


Outlines.
Pool at Bethel
used as threshing floor
Figs almonds Pomegranate trees
yellow
18 June 1901



smooth white rock ; in the valleys the land is buried under innumerable boulders and fragments of broken rock.

The whole land is stony, but Judea shews this at its worst. It is an immense stone wedge thrust into Palestine from east to west, and it is driven into a green land. South of it lie the fertile valleys of Hebron, with their wealth of orchard and plantation. North of it open the "fat valleys" of Samaria, winding among rounded hills planted to the top with olives, or terraced for vines. Over these, here and there, a red cliff may hang, or the irrigation ditches may furrow and interline a vale of dove-coloured clay. But while the green of Judea is for the most part but the thinnest veil of sombre olive-green, a mere setting for the rocks, Samaria is a really green land, variegated by stone.

In the north of Samaria the land sinks gradually upon the Plain of Esdraelon. As we saw it first it was covered by a yellow mist through which nothing could be seen distinctly. But afterwards, viewed in its whole expanse from the top of Tabor in clear sunlight, the great battlefield of the Eastern world appeared in characteristic garb—"red in its apparel," with the very colour of the blood which has so often drenched it.

Galilee repeats the limestone outcrop of Judea, but in far gentler fashion, the undergrowth and trees softening almost every landscape, and the mountains leading the eye along bold sky-lines to rest on that form of beauty and of light which masters and watches over the whole land—the white Hermon. Hermon is always

white. But sometimes when clouds are forming rapidly around its summit, it is a wonder of brightness. On no other mountain, surely, was it that "a bright cloud overshadowed" Jesus and his three friends. Even now, on many a summer day, Hermon is lost in a changing glory of frosted silver, when the sun strikes upon its cloudwork, and the long trails of snow in the corries stream towards the plain below.

The limestone runs on into Phœnicia, and seems to grow whiter there. Nothing could be finer than the valleys east of Tyre at harvest time, when the fields of ripe grain wave below cliffs white as marble, and the whole scene, with its foreground of brilliantly robed reapers, is a study in white and gold. But in the higher valleys of Phœnicia the rock breaks through a rich red soil, which in parts is gemmed with the curious and beautiful "Adonis stones"—little egg-shaped bits of sandstone, dyed to the heart of them with deep crimson, as if they had been steeped in newly shed blood. Little wonder if the women of old days "wept for Tammuz" at the sight of them.

The thing most characteristic of Syrian colour is its faintness and delicacy. Pierre Loti, who in this matter is a witness worthy of all regard, is constantly ending the colour adjectives in his Syrian books with *-atre*—"yellowish," "bluish," "greenish," etc. The general impression is of dim and faded tints, put on, as it were, in thin washes. In the stoniest regions there seems to be no colour at all, as if the sun had bleached them. The curious colouring of the Judean valleys, which has



FELLAH IN HOLIDAY DRESS





been described, is never aggressive, and it takes some carefulness of observation to see anything in them more than a blue green in the sparsely-planted olive-groves fading into faint greenish grey above. The valleys of ripe sesame and vetch are washed into the picture in pale yellow or yellow ochre. Where tilled earth appears it is generally a variegated expanse of light brown, or pink, or terra-cotta. The eastern slopes of Hermon, below the snow, shew vertical stripes like those of the haircloth and jute garments of the peasants, washed out with rain and sun ; or they are spread upon the roots of the mountain like some vast Indian shawl cunningly and minutely interwoven with red and green threads, but worn almost threadbare. As you approach a village in strong sunlight, you see it as a dark brown mass shaded angularly with black ; but it seems to float above a mist of the airiest purple sheen, where the thinly-planted iris-flowers stand in the graveyard before the walls. The Sea of Galilee, as we saw it, was light blue ; the Dead Sea was light green, with a haze of evaporation rendering it even fainter in the distance.

If this be true of the near, it is doubly so of the distant, landscape. In a country so mountainous and so sheer-cleft as Palestine, distant views are seen for the most part as vistas, the "land that is very far off" revealing itself at the end of some V-shaped gorge or towering over some intermediate mountain range. Of course distant views are faint in all lands, but in Palestine the clear air keeps them distinct with clean-cut edge, however faint they are. Thus there is perhaps

nothing more delicate and *spirituel* in the world than those faint dreamlike mountains in the extreme distance of Syrian vistas—the hills east of Jordan grey, with a mere suspicion of blue in them, or the lilac and heliotrope mountains of the desert which form the magic background of Damascus looking eastward.

Reference has been made to the irises (the "lilies of the field") near villages. These are but typical of the general sheen of that carpet of wild flowers which every spring-time spreads over the land. They are of every colour. There are scarlet poppies and crimson anemones, blue dwarf cornflowers, yellow marigolds, white narcissus (said to be the Rose of Sharon); but here they seldom grow in patches of strong hue. Each flower blooms apart, and the sheen of them is delicate and suggestive rather than gorgeous. They seem to share the reticence and shyness of the land, and tinge rather than paint it. Even the animal life conforms to this dainty rule; lizards are everywhere, but their colouring is that of their environment, now stone-grey, now wine-red, now straw-coloured. Chameleons are anything you please—green in growing corn, black among basalt rocks. Tortoises are blue at the sulphur springs, brown or slate in the muddy banks of streams.

This faintness is, however, but half the truth of the colour of Syria. Everywhere it is rendered emphatic by certain vivid splashes of the most daring brilliance. Wherever springs are found you have instances of this contrast, and Palestine is essentially the land of bright foregrounds thrown up against dim backgrounds.



THE VALLEY OF THE JORDAN FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

THE foreground is part of the Mount of Olives. The dark line, at the foot of the hills of Moab closing the distance, marks the rich vegetation along the course of the Jordan. To the right is seen the junction of the river with the Dead Sea.





The Jordan valley is the greatest example, running south along its whole length, "a green serpent" between the pale mountains of the east and the faint mosaic of the western land. Its jungle is uncompromisingly distinct throughout the entire course, and its colour is living green, with a white flash of broken water or a quiet flow of brown bursting here and there through the verdure. Other streams are similarly marked, with luxurious undergrowth of reeds, varied by clumps of hollyhock or edged with winding ribbons of magenta oleander. But the most striking oases of this kind are the valley of Shechem and the city of Damascus. There is a hill seldom visited by tourists, but well worth climbing, set in the broad vale of Makhna, right opposite Jacob's Well. North and south past the foot of this hill runs the broad valley. It is edged on the western side by the continuous line of the central mountain range of Samaria—continuous except for one great gash, where, as if a giant's sword had cleft the range, the valley of Shechem enters that of Makhna at right angles. The whole landscape is in dim colour except for that valley of Shechem. Ebal and Gerizim guard its eastern end, dull and rocky both. But the valley which they guard is fed by countless springs and intersected by rivulets, so that below the shingle of their slopes there spreads a fan-shaped expanse of intensely vivid green, like a carpet flung out from Nablus between the mountains. The lower edge of the green is broken by the white wall of the enclosure of Jacob's Well, and the cupola of

Joseph's tomb. Damascus—surely the most bewitching of cities—owes its witchery to the same cause. The river Abana spends itself upon the city. As you approach it from the south it discloses itself as a mass of bold outline and high colour in the midst of a great field of verdure, flanked on the west by precipitous hills of sand and rock—sheer tilted desert. When you climb those hills you see the white city, jewelled with her minarets of many hues, resting on a cloth of dark green velvet whose edge is sharply defined. Immediately beyond that edge the sand begins, stretching into the farther desert through paler and paler shades of rose and yellow to the lilac hills in the eastern distance.

It is not only the water-springs, however, that provide the land with vivid foregrounds. Loti describes a little sand-hill in the desert "all bespangled with mica," which "sets itself out, shining like a silver tumulus." Such bold and detached features are by no means uncommon even on the west of the Jordan. The name of the cliff "Bozez" in Michmash means "shining," and there are many shining rocks in these valleys—either masses of smooth limestone, or dark basalt rocks, from whose dripping surface the sun is reflected in blinding splendour after rain. Even without such reflection the sudden intrusion of black rock will often give character to an otherwise neutral landscape.

But the sun is the magician of Syria, who bleaches her and then throws up against his handiwork the boldest contrasts of strong light and shade. No one



ARAB FARMER. NEIGHBOURHOOD OF JERUSALEM





who has seen the crimson flush of sunset on the olives, or the sudden change of a grey Judean hill-side to rich orange, or the whole eastern cliffs of the Sea of Galilee turned to the likeness of flesh-coloured marble, will be likely to forget the picture. Loti's wonderful description of desert sunsets—"incandescent violet, and the red of burning coals"—is not overdrawn. Shadows will transform the poorest into the richest colouring. The tawny desert changes to the luscious dark of lengthening indigo at the foot of a great rock; and the shadows of clouds float across Esdraelon, changing the red plain to deep wine-colour as they pass. Silhouettes are of daily occurrence in that crisp air. One scene in particular made an indelible impression. It was a village on terraced heights, thrown black against a gold and heliotrope sunset. The figures of Arabs standing or sitting statuesque upon the sky-line were magnified to the appearance of giant guardians of the walls, and the miserable little hamlet might have been an impregnable fortress.

The inhabitants have entered with full sympathy into the spirit of this play of foreground. They are spectacular if they are anything. Their religion forbids them all practice of the graphic arts, and most of the Western pictures which are to be seen in churches are execrable enough to reconcile them to the restriction. But they obey the law in small things only to break it by transforming themselves and their surroundings into one great picture. Their clothing, their buildings, and their handiwork are a brilliant foil to the dull back-

ground. From them Venice learned her bright colouring, and there are few English homes which have not borrowed something from them.

In part, this is thrust upon them by the sun. The interiors of houses are all Rembrandt work, as Conder has happily remarked. The rooms are dark, and the windows very small. But when the sun shines through the apertures, their rich brown rafters and red pottery gleam out of the shadow. One such interior is especially memorable, where a bar of intense sunlight lit up the skin and many-coloured garments of children sitting in the window-sill, while through the open door the green grass of the courtyard shone. Still more wonderful is the effect when one opens the door of a silk-winding room in sunlight, and sees the colours wound on the great spindles, or when one enters the dark archways of the bazaars where long shafts of light striking down slantwise upon a shining patch below turn the brown shadow of the arch to indigo. The natives see this, and love the lusciousness of it. They build minarets cased with emerald tiles, or domes of copper which will soon be coated with verdigris. Of late years a further touch has been added in the red-tiled roofs which are already so popular in the towns.

In proof of the genius of the Easterns for colour, nothing need be mentioned but their carpets and their glass. The glass of old windows in mosques beggars all description. It is an experience rather than a spectacle. The panes are so minute, and so destitute of picture or of pattern, that they are unnoticed in



SYRIAN SHEPHERD (ABU MUSTAPHA)
CARRYING A LAMB ON HIS SHOULDERS





detail, and the general effect is that of a religious atmosphere in which all one's ordinary thoughts and feelings are lost in the overpowering sense of "something rich and strange." After the magic of that light, with its blended purple and amber and ruby, the finest Western work seems harsh. It is hardly light; it is illuminated shadow. The rugs and carpets, with their intricate colouring, are more familiar and need not be described. The finest of them are of silk, and their delicacy of shade is marvellous. The patterns constantly elude the eye, promising and just almost reaching some recognisable figure, only to lose themselves in a bright maze. It is said that they were suggested by the meadows of variegated flowers; but they are intenser and more passionate—as if their designers had felt that their task was to supply an even stronger counterpart to the faint landscape.

The gay clothing of the East is proverbial. Even the poorest peasants are resplendent. "Fine linen" is still the mark of the rich man, but Lazarus can match him for "scarlet." In certain parts the men are clad in coats of sheepskin, the wool being inside, and protruding like a heavy fringe along the edges. Almost everybody's shoes are bright red. In one place we saw a shepherd whose sheepskin coat had met with an accident, and the patch which filled the vacant space in the raw brown back of him was of an elaborate tartan cloth. In another village all the men wore crimson aprons. When our camp-servants were on the march they seemed to be in sackcloth, or in thick grey felt which

suggested fire-proof apparel ; but when they reached a town they blossomed out into a rainbow. Children playing in a village street, women at the wells, statuesque shepherds standing solitary in the fields, all seemed arranged as for a tableau. Everybody official—the railway guard, the escort, even the mourner at a funeral—is immensely conscious of his dignity ; and on him descends the spirit of Solomon in all his glory. The man you hire to guide you for a walk of half a dozen miles will disappear into his house and emerge in gorgeous array. One of our guides decked himself in flowing yellow robes and marched before us ostentatiously carrying in front of him a weapon which appeared to be a cross between a carving-knife and a reaping-hook, through a land peaceful as an infant school. A procession marching to some sacred place across a plain lights the whole scene as with a string of coloured lanterns. Even where the natives have adopted European dress the fez is retained, and a crowd of men, seen from above, is always ruddy.

The delight in strong colour goes even one step farther. The rich hues of the flesh in sunny lands seem to suit the landscape, and one soon learns to sympathise with the native preference for dusky and brown complexions. To them a fair skin appears leprous, though bright flaxen or auburn hair are regarded with great admiration. Not satisfied, however, with their natural beauty, the Syrians paint and tattoo their flesh in the most appalling manner, and redden their finger-nails with henna. Fashionable ladies, and in some places



ENTRANCE TO THE FORECOURT OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.—JERUSALEM

Sellers of beads from Hebron, eikons and trinkets, displaying their wares.





men also, paint their eyebrows to meet, and touch in their eyelids with antimony, whose blue shadow is supposed to convey the impression of irresistible eyelashes. In towns where "the Paris modes" are the sign of smartness, some of the girls paint their faces pink and white—faces painted with a vengeance, with a thick and shining enamel which transforms the wearers into animated wax dolls of the weirdest appearance. But that which shocks the unsophisticated traveller most is the tattooing of many of the women. Some of them are marked with small arrow-head blue patches on forehead, cheeks, and chin; others are lined and scored like South Sea Islanders, and their lower lips transformed entirely from red to blue.

All this is savage enough, but it illustrates in its own crude way that delight in strong colour which transforms the human life of the East into such a vivid foreground to the faint landscape. In the dress there is artistic instinct as well as barbaric splendour, and in the carpets, the mosaics, and the glass there is brilliant and matchless artistry. As to the general principle which has been stated in regard to natural colouring, this is as it always must have been. These were the quiet hues of the land, and these the brilliant points of strong light in it which Christ's eyes saw, and which gave their colour to the Gospels.

CHAPTER II

THE DESERT

Environment counts for much in national life. A country knows itself, and asserts itself, as in contrast with what is immediately over its border ; or it retains connection with the neighbouring life, and is what it is partly because the region next it overflows into its life. At any rate, to understand anything more than the colour of a land—indeed even to understand that, as we shall see—it is necessary to begin outside it and know something of its surroundings. For Palestine, environment means sea and desert—sea along a straight line for the most part unbroken by any crease or wrinkle of coast-edge which might serve for a harbour, and desert thrown round all the rest, except the mountainous north. Palestine is a great oasis—a fertile resting-place for travellers making the grand journey from Egypt to Mesopotamia ; between which kingdoms she was ever also the buffer state in war and politics. These nations were her visitors, her guests, her terrors, but they never were her neighbours. Her neighbours are the sea and the desert.



BEDOUIN ENCAMPMENT OUTSIDE THE NORTH WALL OF JERUSALEM

The ancient olives amongst which the encampment is pitched are said to be 1000 years old.

The domes of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the adjoining minarets indicate the position of the City. To the left is the tower of the Church of the Redeemer, built and designed by the present German Emperor. Early morning light.





The sea she never took for a friend. With no harbour, nor any visible island to tempt her to adventure, and no sailor blood in her veins, she hated and feared the sea, and thought of it with ill-will. There is little of the wistfulness of romance in her thought of the dwellers in its uttermost parts; little of the sense of beauty in her poetry of the breaking waves. She views the Phœnician trader who does business on the ocean as a person to be astonished at rather than to be counted heroic. She exults in the fact that God has his path on the great waters, but has no wish to make any journey there herself. Her angels plant their feet upon the sea, and she looks forward almost triumphantly to the time when it will be dried up and disappear. Meanwhile its inaccessible huge depth is for her poets a sort of Gehenna—a fit place for throwing off evil things beyond the chance of their reappearing. Sins are to be cast into it, and offenders, with millstones at their necks.

The desert was Israel's real neighbour. South-east from her it stretched for a thousand miles. From N.N.E. round through E. and S. to W. it hemmed her in. To a Briton, watching the departure of the Bagdad dromedary post from Damascus, the desert seems infinitely more appalling and unnatural than the sea. For ten days these uncanny beasts and men will travel, marching (it is said) twenty hours out of every twenty-four. The stretch of dreariness which opens to the Western imagination, as you watch the lessening specks in the tawny distance, is indescribable. To the

Eastern it is not so, and it never was so. He knows its horrors, and yet he loves it. The modern Arab calls it Nefud (*i.e.* "exhausted," "spent"), and, according to Palgrave, there are in the Arabian desert sands no less than 600 feet in depth. Yet with all its horrors it is after all his home.

The desert is not all consecrated to death. Besides the occasional oases which dot its barren expanse, there are many regions where grass and herbage may be had continually so long as the flocks keep wandering. Accordingly the long low black tent, with its obliquely pitched tent-ropes and skilfully driven pegs, takes the place of such substantial building as might create a city. It has been so for countless generations, until now the desert Arab fears walls and will not be persuaded to enter them. Kinglake gives a remarkable instance of this, telling of a journey to Gaza on which his Arabs actually abandoned their camels rather than accompany them within the gates.[1]

Colonel Conder insists that the Arabs are entirely distinct from the Fellahin of the Syrian villages; yet he and other writers call attention to the borderland east of Jordan where the boundaries of the rival races swing to and fro with the varying successes or failures of the years. In places where the land lies open, as at the Plain of Esdraelon, the east invades the west. No one who travels in Palestine can fail to be impressed—most will probably be surprised—by the frequency with which those black hair-cloth tents are

[1] *Eothen*, ch. xxiii.

seen, sprawling like the skin of some wild-cat pegged out along the ground. If the question be asked what becomes of them, the day's journey will likely enough supply the answer. In the market-place of a town you may see their inhabitants trading their desert ware for city produce. But even such slight contact of city with desert evidently has its temptations. In the valley below, the tent is pitched on the edge of a field rudely cultivated. The nomad here has already yielded to the agriculturist. Descend to the Jordan valley, and you shall see the hair-cloth covering a hut whose sides are of woven reeds from the river, and a little farther on the covering itself will be exchanged for a roof of reeds. Finally, you may look from the road that runs between the two main sources of the Jordan, and see in the southern distance, shining out against the lush verdure of the Huleh morass, the red-tiled roof of a two-storey villa—the house of the Sheikh of the local tribe of Arabs![1] This immigration has gone on from time immemorial, and it was some such process by which Palestine received all her earlier inhabitants. Once fixed in cities and settled down to the cultivation of the fields, their character and way of life so changed that the desert and its folk became their enemies. Yet a deeper loyalty remained through all such alienation; and, in spite of dangers and even hostilities, the desert was still their former home.

[1] The natives have at last borrowed the sloping red-tiled roofs from the Franks who introduced them. Cf. a letter written by Professor G. A. Smith to the *Spectator* October 1891.

It is not only by its neighbourhood, however, that the desert has influenced Palestine. Nature has done her best to shut it off from the land, from the eastern side at least, by the tremendous barrier of the Jordan valley. Not even the angel of the wilderness, one would think, might cross that defence. Yet even that barrier has been crossed, and a bird's-eye view of Palestine shews a land bitten into by great tracts of real desert west of Jordan. In a modified degree, the whole of Judea—that great stone wedge to which reference was made in Chapter I.—exemplifies this. Half the Judean territory is wilderness, and the other half is only kept back from the desert by sheer force of industry. Even on the western side this is strikingly seen. As viewed from the ocean, the desolate sand and scrub of the coast seems to clutch at the land, stretching here and there far inland from the shore. But the desert of Judah, in the south-east of the country, is the great intrusion of the desert upon Palestine. The sea-board of Palestine is perhaps the smoothest and most unbroken of any country in the world. But if a coast-line of the desert were sketched in the same way as a sea-coast is shewn on maps, the edge would show an outline almost as broken as that of the Greek coast, with many a bay and creek. The desert is the sea of Syria, and its inthrust is like that of great fingers feeling their way through the pastures to the very gates of her cities, and at one place reaching a point within a mile or two of her capital. Disraeli describes graphically the transition from Canaan to



CANA OF GALILEE

This is the village of Kafr Kenná, believed to be the Cana of the New Testament, where our Lord performed his first miracle at the marriage feast. The Latin Chapel is said to cover the site of the miracle.

In the foreground is a youth threshing corn according to the ancient method. Time sunset.





stony Arabia — the first sandy patches; the herbage gradually disappearing till all that is left of it is shrubs tufting the ridges of low undulating sand-hills; then the sand becoming stony, with no plant-life remaining but an occasional thorn, until plains of sand end in dull ranges of mountains covered with loose flints. In the journey from Bethlehem to the Dead Sea the transition is even more abrupt. Hardly have you left the "fields of the shepherds" when you perceive that the herbs, though still plentiful among the stones, are parched. In a mile or two there is nothing round you but wild greyish-yellow sand and rock. You thread your way precariously along the sides of gorges till you reach that sheer yellow cleft down which Kidron is slicing its way with the air of a suicide to the sea. Then you come up to a lofty ridge from which are seen the dreary towers of Mar Saba, like the "blind squat turret" of Childe Roland's adventure, "with low grey rocks girt round, chin upon hand, to see the game at bay." So you journey on, feeling at times that this is not scenery, it is being buried alive in great stone chambers beneath the surface; at other times welcoming the sight of a broom bush like that under which Elijah lay down and prayed that he might die. The carcase of a horse or the skeleton of a camel are almost welcome, breaking the monotonous emptiness of this land of death.

The physical influence of the desert on the land is evident in many ways. Greece and Britain are not more truly children of the sea than is Syria the desert's

child. Even those who have had no experience of the desert proper, but have only made the regulation tour in Palestine, will have memories of what they saw recalled to them in every page of a book descriptive of the desert. The land throughout has ominously much in common with its desolate neighbour—so much so as to suggest a territory rescued from the desert and kept from reverting only by strenuous handling. Those who have seen both describe the desert as the land in caricature and fierce exaggeration.

Many things go to confirm this impression. The winds that blow from east or south have crossed the sand before they reach the mountains. When they are cool, they are pure and fresh, unbreathed before, "virgin air." The evening breeze of Syria is "the respiration of the desert" after its breathless heat of day. When the wind is hot, it is terrible as only wind can be that comes off burning sand. The *shirky*, or sirocco, interprets the desert in a fashion which the traveller is not likely to forget. We rode against it half the length of the Plain of Esdraelon, when the thermometer registered 104° in the shade, until the steel of our coloured eye-glasses became so hot that we were glad to remove them, and endure the glare by preference. At Jericho we had a sand-storm, when the hot wind rose suddenly in the middle of the night. The tent-curtains shook loudly, the door fastenings gave, and the door itself flapped like a flag in a gale. Rising, we fastened it firmly to its stakes, but soon the whole tent began to shake violently, and its heavy pole

swung. Sleep was impossible, and we lay wondering what would happen next. Then the sound of feet outside was heard, and of hammers driving home the pegs. We rose and went out, just in time to see the tent next our own lifting its pegs one after another, and its loose ropes lashing free upon its roof. We seized what ropes we could, and white men in sleeping attire, and black men in all stages of semi-nudity, hung on to them together. The natives shouted at the pitch of their voices, and the wind drove clouds of dust and straw, and even pebbles, about us like a hot hail-storm. We fought the wind till we were beaten. The ropes pulled us in spite of all we could do; the pegs lifted and the pole swung down flat, with some men inside and some outside the canvas. It was a rare scene by lantern-light, of dust and wreckage, beds, basins, portmanteaus, clothes, and much else turned over and scattered promiscuously. For passing tourists all this is but an amusing adventure, yet it enables the least imaginative to realise something of the attack of the desert on the land.

The plant-life of the desert has its counterpart in the land. Loti describes it with his usual vividness. There is the furze dusted with fine sand; there are the strange sand-flowers of yellow or violet colours, the spikes shot out of the soil without leafage, the balls of thorn which wound the feet, the occasional palm-tree, the white edible manna plant. And there is the exquisite scent of these after rain, so strong that one might think a jar of perfume had been broken at the tent door—a

perfume in which he distinguishes the scents of resin, lemon, geranium, and myrrh. All this the Palestine traveller seems to recognise ; in that curious but familiar flora, and that pungent aromatic smell, we have the intrusion of the desert again.

The colour of the land has already been described, and here again we have the touch of the wilderness. The colouring is no doubt partly due to the quality of the air, dry and crisp as nothing but those miles of sand could make it. Having absolutely no concerns of its own, as wooded or grassy lands have, the desert abandons itself to the sun. It takes and gives the sunlight wholly, making itself a mere reflector for the light and heat. "Everything in this desert is of one colour—a tawny yellow. The rocks, the partridges, the camels, the foxes, the ibex, are all of this shade."[1] Yet this absolutely neutral region, just because of its neutrality, catches the sunrise and the sunset in a brilliance that is all its own, and deepens its shadows to liquid depths of indigo and violet. In this we see the extreme and untempered form of that interplay of faint background with intense foreground which is the characteristic feature of the colour-scheme of Syria.

It is the same as regards form. The two towers of Mar Saba are among the most impressive of all the Syrian spectacles. Pitilessly unsuggestive, they are the most unhomely things one ever saw, like the mere skeletons of habitations. But part of this impression comes from the shape of the surrounding hills. Ranged

[1] *Tent Work*, p. 54.



THE MEETING OF THE VALLEYS OF HINNOM AND JEHOSHAPHAT, SEEN FROM THE EASTERN POINT OF THE WALLS OF ZION

THE corner tower of the Walls of Zion is on the extreme right. Immediately below it passes the road leading eastward to the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Kidron). Near the foot of the tower may be noticed the grating covering the shaft leading to the ancient aqueduct which brought water from the distant Pools of Solomon round the Southern Walls of the City and along the now deep-buried Tyropœon Valley to the Temple Area. The Hill of Offence, with the village of Siloam, lies to the extreme left. Over it in the distance are the hills of Moab, and below is a piece of water lying close to the Pool of Siloam. The site is marked by the minaret of a mosque. The large bare hill seamed with fissures is part of the mountains of Judea. In the foreground is a camel ploughing. Sunset effect.





in a wide semicircle, their fronts eaten out with landslips and torrents, they are polished and smooth like gigantic sculptures. In some parts the regularity of their cones and tables suggests the work of purposeless but mighty builders. In other parts the rocks are twisted as if by tormentors, or tumbled in utter confusion. This too, as we shall see, has its modified counterpart in the land.

If the desert has thus produced a strong physical effect upon the land, its moral effects are even more apparent. We have seen how to the dwellers west of Jordan it was at once an abiding enemy and an ancient home. Shut out from it by the huge trench of the Jordan valley and the barricade of the eastern mountains, the Syrian still feels enough of the desert's fiery touch to fear it as an enemy. Its wind blasts his crops and its heat drives him from his valleys to the hill country for the breath of life. Every traveller speaks of the "positive weight" of heat that makes men bend low in their saddles. Others besides the Persians are constrained, as Kinglake puts it, to bow down before the sun, whose "fierce will" is most terribly felt in those tracts of the land which the desert has claimed for its own. In the desert there are the same conditions which are to be found in the land, only in fierce extreme and without mitigation. It is the place of tempests, fires, and reptiles. These visit the land at times, but they abide in that weird country into whose distances the Syrian may peer from most of his mountain tops. There, too, abide those dark and occult powers of

evil in which every Eastern man believes. The magic of the desert—its treacherous mirage, its genii (by no means difficult to imagine in the forms of sandy whirlwinds whose march is strewn with corpses), and its infinite unexplored possibilities of terror—all this is very real to the native imagination. Its inhabitants, too, are uncanny to think of. The true Arabian, whom perhaps they may have met on a journey, with his jade-handled jewelled sword and his shrunken skin ; the lunatics who have wandered to its congenial wildness ; the anchorites and ascetics whom, like the scapegoat of ancient times, sin has driven forth to its unwalled prison-house,—all these fill in for Syrians the ghastly picture, and its tales of wars and massacres add the last touch of horror.

Nothing proves and exemplifies all this more strikingly than the apparently unreasonable view of the fertility, beauty, and general perfection of Palestine which its inhabitants have always cherished. Visitors from the West are often disappointed, and as they move from place to place their wonder grows as they recall the Biblical descriptions of the land flowing with milk and honey. Allowing for the many centuries of misrule and deterioration, it still remains obvious that Palestine never can have been that dreamland of natural delight which piety has imagined. But the inhabitant views it, as Dr. Smith has pointed out, not in contrast with the West, but in contrast with the desert. We have to remember how " its eastern forests, its immense wheat-fields, its streams, the oases round its perennial

fountains, the pride of Jordan, impress the immigrant nomad." This contrast exaggerates all his blessings in a heat of appreciation. Coming in from the desert, a man sees trees and fountains not as they are in themselves, but as they are in contrast with burning sand : he welcomes them as the gift of God's grace. The sound of wind among the leaves or of flowing water is to him truly the speech of a god.[1] To many a wayfarer the poorest outskirts of the Syrian land have meant salvation from imminent death, and so appreciation enlarges to optimism, and the very barrenness of the desert becomes a challenge to hope and faith. Streams will break forth there, as in his happy experience they have already broken forth, until the whole barren waste shall blossom as the rose. It is by such hope and faith that the tribes of Palestine have lived. There is a magnificent indomitableness in the spectacle of Jews after two thousand years of exile still celebrating their vintage festival in the slums of great cities, or in the "squalid quarter of some bleak northern town where there is never a sun that can at any rate ripen grapes." One seems to find the key to this in that tradition of the Arabs that certain ruins near the Dead Sea are the remains of ancient vineyards. The Syrian land can never be seen but as a miracle of life and beauty rescued from the desert, and that appreciation becomes the incentive for a larger hope.

Yet it is not as an enemy, however wonderfully conquered or strenuously held at bay, that the desert

[1] Cf. *The Semites*, Robertson Smith, chaps. iii. and v.

appeals most to the Syrian. As he looks eastward to the hills of Moab and dreams of what lies beyond them, there is perhaps more of wistfulness than of terror in his heart. The melancholy note of his music, heard by every camp-fire in the long evenings, is infinitely suggestive as well as pathetic. Where was that note learned if not in black tents pitched in the boundless waste, where man's littleness, in contrast with the great powers of Nature, oppressed him into prone fatalism, or revealed to him the infinite refuge and comfort of the Everlasting Arms? He whose fathers have sung such songs will not satisfy his soul with the bustle of towns. He will need the desert for retreat, that his confused mind may calm itself down to order and find new revelations of truth. And when the Syrian retreats to the desert he seems rather to be going home than abroad. David and Elijah, Paul and Mohammed, for various reasons, but with the same urgency, betook themselves to the solitude. Jesus Christ himself was driven of the Spirit into the wilderness. If temptation waited them there, and the sense of exile and desertion, it was there also that angels ministered to them; and ancient prophecies were fulfilled in those "streams of spiritual originality which broke forth in the deserts of moral routine" of their times. To their spirit, and to the spirit of all dwellers in the land, the desert is not enemy only, it is home.

This fact is abundantly borne out by many traits of character which are the survivals of a desert ancestry



SYRIAN PEASANT SEATED: IN PROFILE





There is nothing in Syria which can explain the fact that the most skilful dragoman cannot understand a map, nor guide you to your destination by geographical directions. On unknown ground a Syrian is of little use as guide. On one occasion some of us set out on a journey of five or six miles in Hauran under the guidance of an excellent lad who started with the air of a Napoleon Bonaparte. His directions were to go straight from Muzerib to Sheikh Miskin—two stations on the railway south of Damascus, between which the railway line runs in a wide curve. Our route was the bow-string, while the line was the bent bow. For a little way he boldly marched forward, but soon began to edge towards the rails, and finally lost his head altogether, crossed the line, and set out on a route whose only apparent destination was Persia ! This was too much for us, and we mutinied and reversed the direction, arriving at Sheikh Miskin in less than an hour, with our guide under a cloud. There could not have been a better illustration of a Syrian's helplessness on ground without familiar landmarks. He finds his way partly by a nomad instinct, very difficult to account for ; partly by the habit of noticing minute features of the road which entirely escape the ordinary observer. A story is told of a thief in a certain town in Palestine who entered a house and stole nothing. He simply went out and claimed the house before the judge. When the case came to trial, the thief challenged the owner to tell how many steps were in the stair, how many panes of glass in the windows and a long catalogue of other such

details. This the owner could not do, and when the thief gave the numbers correctly, the house was at once given to him as its obvious possessor. The tale at once recalls the Arab of our childhood who described the route of the strayed camel.

The Syrian character is nothing if not complex, a mass of paradox whose contradictory elements it seems hopeless to attempt to reconcile. The politest and the most ruffianly of men, the most effusively frank and the most impenetrably wary, the most silent and the most voluble, the gayest in laughter and the most melancholy in song, is the Syrian. He will bully you so long as he has the majority, and he will beg for the privilege of tying your shoe's latchet if the majority is with you. He will row a boat or drive a donkey under a noonday sun with a violence which threatens apoplexy ; he will suddenly subside into a repose which no surrounding bustle can disturb. The captain of the *Rob Roy* tells how in the Huleh region a native boy running alongside pointed his long gun at him at least twenty times with the cry of *bakhshish*, so close that he once knocked the barrel aside with his paddle ; and yet in the tent that evening this same youngster " was my greatest favourite from his lively laugh and eyes like diamonds, and his quick perception of all I explained." In a note on page 39 an adventure of our own is told which illustrates sufficiently the rapidity of change in the mood of the native. He is a civilised barbarian, a scrupulous fraud, an aged little child. No doubt so complex a character is traceable to many causes, but

in the main it is the work of the desert. There the extreme conditions—the long hunger and the occasional surfeit, the great silence and the shrill speech in which that silence unburdens itself, the demand for desperate exertion and the long deep rest—these call forth the most opposite qualities, each in exaggerated degree.

Perhaps the most important contributions of the desert to the Syrian character have been two. There is a certain hardiness and strenuous carelessness of comfort, which produces a rather bleak impression on European travellers, but which nevertheless has counted for a great deal in national life. It has told in opposite ways. Judea's success has been undoubtedly due to the fact that it had to be fought for against such bitter odds. On the other hand, this same independence of fate has led the nation to settle down in a too easy contentment. Defeat, and even oppression, sit more lightly on people who are indifferent to circumstances; and if the artificial demands for luxury have been the ruin of some nations, they have been the saving of others, keeping alive in them their vigour and whetting their ambition. The other contribution is the instinctive kindliness and hospitality which are well known as characteristic of the desert tribes. Where life is so precarious, it inevitably comes to be regarded as an inviolable trust by the man on whose mercy it is cast. Accordingly the wandering Arab has but to draw a circle round his laden camel in the sand in order to secure every scrap of his possessions from robbery; and the bitterest enemies are sure of

safety so long as they abide in each other's tents. A little incident which occurred to ourselves brought home to us vividly the real kindliness of the Eastern sense of guest-right. It was in Damascus, and after nightfall. Some of us, wishing to see how the city amused itself, set out for a ramble through the streets. It was only nine o'clock, yet everything was shut up and the bazaars and thoroughfares silent and deserted. At last we found a little café still doing business at the end of the high black vault of a bazaar. Seats were placed in the open air in front of it, while from within came the rattle of dice and the voices of one or two gamblers. Sitting down on the outside bench, we asked for coffee, which was immediately brought. A stylishly dressed Moslem, in an indescribable flow of robes, took his seat silently opposite us and sat smoking his nargileh. When we rose to go we found that he had paid for us all, and when we would have thanked him he would have none of it, satisfied with the consciousness of having shewn hospitality to strangers sojourning in his land. We could not help wondering how long he might have continued making the circuit of London restaurants before a similar experience would have fallen his way! There is a tale of a scoundrel who acts as guide to English travellers, and presents to each of them a certificate from a former victim, which invariably makes them laugh. The writing is, "I was a stranger and ye took me in." It was pleasing to find that this testimony need not always be ironical.



SEATED FIGURE OF SYRIAN SHEPHERD
IN SHEEPSKIN COAT





EXTRACT FROM JOURNAL

One of the horses had been stolen in the night. It was the last on the line, and beyond it Harun was sleeping on the ground. At 11.30 all was right, but by 12.30 it had disappeared. By 1 A.M. the village had been roused, and the head men were coming in to the camp offering us one of their mares in compensation. The mares, which were wretched skeletons of beasts, were refused, and the horse demanded. Nothing could persuade them to bring him back, or to acknowledge any cognisance of him whatever. They said that passing robbers had taken him, and begged us not to report the affair. Our dragoman, however, took another view. He wrote a letter, long and circumstantial, describing us as "Hawajas" (merchants, gentlemen), travelling for information under tescera from the Sultan. The touch of genius in the letter was its insistence upon the seriousness of this affair on the ground that we were travelling under three flags, the Union Jack, the Turkish flag, and the Stars and Stripes. This letter was sent, by one of our men on horseback, to the Kaimakham, governor of the district, at a place some distance from where we were. The Kaimakham passed him on to the Mudir at another village, a person of terrible reputation, of whom everybody in the neighbourhood was afraid. The upshot of it all was that Mohammed, the messenger, returned to camp accompanied by two soldiers, powerful and intelligent young fellows, but savage-looking and rather ragged. The taller of the two, named Nimr (the leopard), was armed with bayonet, rifle, and revolver, while a double belt of cartridges added to the effect. His orders were to take the thirteen leading men of Banias in irons, and march them off "shoulder-tight" to prison at Mejdel. During the day a great meeting was held in the dragoman's tent, the soldiers on one side, the "leading men" on the other. One of the latter protested that this was unfair—they had expected the dragoman to grow cooler, but although he had been hot at first, he was getting hotter instead of cooler. The reply was—(may it be forgiven !)—that he had meant to get cooler, but the Hawajas were getting hotter steadily, owing to the three flags aforesaid. After a long parley it was arranged that they should send to another village for a horse worth £20, the value of the stolen one. They stoutly maintained that a stranger, and none of themselves, had committed the robbery, and that it was a bitter day when the Hawajas had pitched

their tents among them. Nimr the soldier sat frowning and beating the ground savagely with a stick between his wide open legs. He repeated several times, with gusto, the aphorism, "Better to touch fire and scorpions than the property of Hawajas," to which the rueful answer of the Sheikh was that it *would* be better! All was gloom, and when at last a messenger was sent off to procure a horse worth £20, the grandees went to their houses with the air of men doomed. Next morning the horse was brought, and was to be seen at the end of the line kicking and biting viciously. Its worth was only £15, but the balance was condoned. We expected that this would draw forth gratitude and even some gladness; but instead it brought them all to tears, and drew from them many assurances of the miserable poverty of their condition, and the inevitable ruin that awaited them if we actually accepted this horse which they had brought. To these pleadings the dragoman was deaf, insisting that we must now at least let things take their course. When they saw that this was the final position of affairs. they ceased from wailing. Within five minutes our own original horse was led into the camp, and their new one removed! Their game had been played to its very last turn, and having failed was laid aside. During the rest of our sojourn there these same men lingered in the camp, manifesting neither regret nor shame, but smoking, chatting, and laughing with our company in the highest possible good-humour.



ON THE ROAD FROM JERUSALEM TO BETHANY

The village of Bethany lies behind the slope of the hill in the middle distance, over which the road passes from left to right. The farther hills overlook the valley of the Jordan on the west, whilst the more distant range, the mountains of Moab, closes the distance on the east. Time, noon in June, brilliant day with clouds.





CHAPTER III

THE LIE OF THE LAND

EVERY writer about Palestine speaks of the smallness and concentration of the land, yet these take the best informed by surprise. It is "the least of all lands" indeed, when one thinks how much has happened in it. Leaving Jaffa at 10 A.M., the steamer reaches Beyrout at 6 P.M. The passengers in that short sail have seen the whole of Palestine. National life there is a miniature rather than a picture. In a stretch of country equal to that between Aberdeen and Dundee you cover the whole central ground of the Bible, from the Sea of Galilee to Jerusalem. In a ride equal to the distance from London to Windsor there may be seen enough to interpret many centuries of the world's supreme history. The Dead Sea is but 50 miles from the Mediterranean, the Sea of Galilee about 25 miles; while the distance in miles between the two seas is only 55. Yet in that little land there is every kind of soil, from mere sand and broken limestone to rich red and chocolate loam. It is a mountainous country throughout, and its in-

habitants are a race of Highlanders. So numerous are its mountain spurs that you may pass up and down the centre of the country for scores of miles, and yet never catch sight of the sea, though you constantly feel it in the breeze. Everything is there—the gorge, the wide sweeping valley, the great plain, the rolling tableland. It is, indeed, a land in miniature, the *multum in parvo* of lands. Its history and religion, like its natural features, are crushed together and compact. The epigram is the only form of speech that can express it.

This idea of smallness and compression, however, is by no means the only possible view which may be taken. All depends on what it is with which one compares Palestine. Thinking of it as a field of history, one inevitably has other fields in mind. If we think of Britain, Palestine is but the size of Wales ; if of France and Germany, it is the equivalent of Alsace. But a more primitive point of view is gained when you regard it as a reclaimed tract of the desert. Just as Egypt is a huge river-meadow, and Venice a glorified harbour in the sea, so Syria is the largest oasis in the world. Its whole geographical character is that of desert, more or less modified by water. The sculptured hills are here, the rock and the shingle and the sand. Dry up its rivers and arrest its rainfall, and you will have a continuation of the peninsula of Sinai, except that instead of granite it will be of limestone. It is this, as we have seen, that has led its inhabitants to regard it with a rare appreciation, an extraordinary sense of its

preciousness, and a tendency to exaggerate both its beauty and its fertility.

Nothing illustrates this loving appreciation of their land better than the play of imagination which has created the place-names of Palestine. Hebrews, Arabs, and Crusaders vie with each other in the poetic beauty of their nomenclature. It is a little land, but there is much witchery in it. For its inhabitants it *lives* personified, and its masses of mountain scenery are often named from parts of the human body. There are "the shoulder," "the side," "the thigh," "the rib," "the back." The "head" of Pisgah looks down upon the "face" of the wilderness.[1] There is a "hollow hearth"—homeliest of names to a Semite. In other names poetry has reached its utmost of epigrammatic beauty—"the dance of the whirls," "the star of the wind," "the diamond of the desert." Yet sacred and beautiful as its scenery was to Israel, she had a dearer bond with her land than that. She was kept from nature-worship by a spiritual faith which created such names as "Bethel" (the house of God), and many others of similar significance. These claim the land in all its length and breadth for the God of Israel. Every green spot was for the Semites the dwelling-place of some divinity; this whole oasis of hers was for Israel the house of her God of peace and blessing. To the ancient Greek "God was the view"; to the Hebrew, God was the inhabitant of the view—He Himself was Righteousness. And because the land

[1] For these and other instances cf. *Historical Geography*, p. 52, and Appendix I.

was His—rescued by Him from the desert with His waters, and given to the people in His love—it was tenfold more dear to them. Down every vista which shewed them a land that was very far off, their eyes caught sight also of some vision of the King in His beauty ; every high hill was a veritable mountain of the Lord's house.

Let us try to get, as it were, a bird's-eye view of this fascinating country, noticing in their right perspective and significance its outstanding natural features. Dr. Smith's *Historical Geography* has perhaps rendered no service higher than the aid towards this which is afforded by its epitome and map (pp. 49, 50, 51). These divide Palestine into five parallel strips running north and south. Cutting across these strips in a straight line westwards from the desert to the sea, we first traverse the range of the eastern mountains ; then dip to the immense gulf of the Jordan valley, far below the Mediterranean level ; then climb by precipitous ascents to the summit of the central range ; then descend through the foot-hills ; and finally land on the maritime plain. To thoroughly grasp the lie of these five longitudinal regions is the first necessity for understanding the geography of Palestine. Its general impression is one of extraordinary brokenness of contour, and Zangwill points out the important fact that a land with so much hill surface has in reality a very much larger superficial area than that estimated by multiplying its length by its breadth.

By far the most remarkable feature in the whole



THE HILLS ROUND NAZARETH FROM THE PLAIN OF ESDRAELON

The village of Nazareth shews out white in the dip between the hills. The precipitous hill to the left is the one to which the inhabitants of Nazareth conducted our Lord with the intention of casting him down headlong. Afternoon light.





territory is the Jordan valley. Rising from springs at the western roots of Hermon, high above sea level, it sinks by rapid stages till at the Dead Sea it reaches bottom nearly 1300 feet below the Mediterranean. Down its extraordinary gully flows the one great river of Palestine. There are other perennial streams, but none to compare with Jordan either for volume or for associations. It is this mass of flowing water which stands as the heart and soul of the Syrian oasis. Its mighty stream has overcome the desert, and claimed the western land for greenness and for life. It is this huge cleft that has isolated the Holy Land for the purposes of its God.

The only clear opening from the Jordan to the Mediterranean is the Plain of Esdraelon. Standing on Jordan's bank below Bethshan and looking westward, you see before you a valley whose farther end shows nothing but sky. Many streams cut their way down its slopes beside a green morass, and hold in their embrace the ruins of a strong city. You must follow them up westwards for some ten miles before you reach sea level, and soon after that you cross the watershed in a wide valley with mountains rising to north and south. Jezreel stands above you on a protruding tongue of high cultivated land to the south. At a level of about 200 feet above the sea, you suddenly emerge upon a great triangular plain, with Carmel at its apex, 15 miles to the west. This is the Plain of Esdraelon. The one really large level space in Syria, its rich soil, even surface, and plentiful water-supply make it a famous piece of cultivated ground. But it is also the natural battlefield

of the East, and its chief associations are not with agriculture but with war.

Esdraelon, however, is but an incident in the geographical fact of Syria, though an important and large incident. It is but the largest of those open spaces into which Syrian valleys swell out. There are three or four of them in the Jordan valley, and several of smaller size are scattered here and there throughout the country. The really essential feature of the land—that, indeed, which historically *is* the land—is the mountain range that sweeps from Lebanon to Hebron and beyond. It was on the mountains that Israel lived. The Plain of Esdraelon, being the ganglion of the natural main routes of traffic and of war, was but a doubtful possession, precariously held at best, and often changing owners. The strong city of Bethshan at the eastern mouth of its main valley was held by Israel's enemies during almost the whole of her history ; and, until a year or two ago, the Arabs made yearly raids upon the Plain. Again, the sea-coast was largely in the hands of enemies ; while the Jordan valley, with its insupportable heat and malaria, was thinly peopled, and its population swiftly degenerated from national as well as from moral loyalties. Thus he who would know the Holy Land must, in every sense of the words, "lift up his eyes unto the hills."

It was our good fortune to have this view at its very best for our first sight of Palestine. We should have landed at Jaffa, but a rather doubtful case of plague at Alexandria inflicted a two days' quarantine on all ships

coming out of Egypt. So we looked at Jaffa from under the yellow flag, and sailed off in the morning sunlight northward to Beyrout. All day long we lay on deck, with maps spread out before us. The quarantine had cost us the sight of the Greek Easter ceremony at Jerusalem, but it gave us in exchange the rare experience of a daylight sail along the Syrian coast. The day was marvellously clear, and every object on the shore was seen in photographic outline, while the various distances were preserved in fading colours, back to the thin transparency against the sky which stood for the furthest mountain ranges. The shore was barren: a low belt of tawny sand, broken by dark olive-green scrub, and very desolate. One solitary house was all we saw for the first two hours, and in another place a column of smoke, apparently rising from some invisible camp. Beyond this the foot-hills east of the plain were seen, lifting towards the great central ridge of the mountain range. Though broken here and there by an occasional point, or overlooked by a peak that rose very high beyond, the crest of the range was remarkably level, with wavy outline. Until we passed Carmel it shewed as a unity—"the *mountain*" of Ephraim and Judah. North from that there was a bolder sky-line, much nearer to the sea, which led on eventually to the magnificent heights of Lebanon, beautiful as they are mighty.

Let us suppose ourselves to land at Beyrout and journey from north to south well inland. At first we climb eastwards among bold bare hills, in whose recesses

mulberry gardens nestle and on whose heights innumerable villages perch. Cedars are conspicuous by their absence, but there are plenty of humbler trees. Soon we come to realise the large-scale meaning and contour of the district. We have been crossing Lebanon, whose highest peaks have revealed themselves now and then far to the north. Some twenty miles from the coast we find ourselves in the valley of the Litany (Leontes). This whole region is easily understood. It consists of the magnificent ranges of Lebanon and Antilebanon and the spacious valley between them, running in ample curves parallel with the shore.

Mighty though these are, however, it is neither of them that has received the name of Jebel-es-Sheikh—"the patriarch of mountains." That honour is reserved for Hermon, the range and summit which Antilebanon thrusts south from it into Galilee, just opposite Damascus. It is happily named "the sheikh." Go where you will in Palestine, Hermon seems to lie at the end of some vista or other. For many miles around it, Hermon commands everything. Its mass tilts the plain and sends out innumerable spurs of rich and fertile land; its snow shines far and gives character to the view; its eastern waters redeem the wilderness through many a mile of Hauran; and from its western roots spring all the fountains of the Jordan. This is the king of Syria, by whose beneficent might the desert has become oasis.

While the southern continuation of Hermon holds up the high tableland of Bashan and runs it on into the



MOUNT HERMON FROM THE SLOPES OF TABOR

The lofty mountain in the extreme distance is Mount Hermon. Just below it, on this side the next range of mountains, is "The Horns of Hattin," overlooking the site of the great defeat of the Christians by Saladin on the 4th of July 1187. A glimpse of the Sea of Galilee is given to the right.

The view is taken from the roof of the Franciscan Monastery on Mount Tabor. The foreground is a portion of the cultivated part of the mountain.





mountains of Gilead and Moab east of Jordan, the thrust of Lebanon into Western Galilee ends curiously in a succession of hills divided by valleys running east and west, like great waves of mountain rolling south to break along the northern edge of the Plain of Esdraelon. There is a quiet regularity about these Galilean Highlands, which gives the impression of a region made to plan. The eastern end of Esdraelon is blocked by the group of Tabor and "Little Hermon," while the feature of the western end is the long lonely ridge of Carmel.

Crossing the plain we enter Samaria, whose deep rounded valleys, rich in corn, send their sweeping curves in all directions. Here there is neither the dominant north-and-south trend of Lebanon, nor the horizontal ripple of Galilee, but an intricate network of curving valleys, which leave the mountains everywhere more individual and distinct, and which frequently expand into wide meadows or fields. Yet the general rise of the region is from west, sloping up to east. The watershed is perhaps 10 to 15 miles from Jordan, while it is more than 30 miles from the sea. But Jordan here is well-nigh 1000 feet below sea-level, so that the eastern slope is immensely steeper than the western.

As we enter Judea, we find the land, as it were, gathering itself up on almost continuous heights. The lesser valleys are shallow, and the hilltops swell from the lofty plateau in colossal domes or cupolas. So high is the general level that when we come to Jerusalem we look in vain for the mountains we had understood to be

round about her. No peaks cleave the sky—only smooth and gentle hills, which have never been in any way her defence, but have made excellent platforms for the siege-engines of her enemies, and have grown wood for the crosses of her inhabitants. The lateral gorges of Judea, both east and west, cut into her high tableland in angular zigzags, and as you descend these in either direction you realise what is really meant by "the mountains round about Jerusalem." She does not see them, lying secure upon the height to which they have exalted her. But he who approaches her must come by their gorges, where for many miles his sky will be but a strip seen between sheer heights of cliff and scaur.[1] The rugged sharpness of outline reaches its climax on the eastern side, where the range, split in the wildest gorges, falls in fragmentary masses between their mouths down to the Jordan valley. Nothing in the land has a more bare and savage grandeur than the square-chiselled mountain blocks of Quarantana, seen from below at Jericho in black angular silhouette against the sunset. South of Jerusalem the Kidron gorge, cleaving the intruding desert, exaggerates the wildness of the north, but as you climb past Bethlehem to Hebron you are in a region liker to Samaria, with its deeper and more rounded valleys and its richer pasture and cultivation. South of Hebron the range spreads fanwise and gradually sinks to the desert.

The most impressive memories of the land, so far as its form and contour go, are two—the gorges cleft

[1] Cf. *The Least of all Lands*, Principal Miller, ch. I.

through the Judean mountain, and certain isolated conical hills thrown up from the Samaritan valleys. Judea is mountain, emphasised by gorge ; Samaria is valley, diversified by hill. The gorges are uncompromising. When we read, for instance, the third verse of the seventh chapter of Joshua, we think of an ordinary march—"The men went up and viewed Ai. And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up ; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai ; and make not all the people to labour thither." But he who has himself "gone up" from Jericho to Ai puts feeling into his reading of the words "to labour thither." That is the only way of going up. The recollection is of several hours of precipitous riding, with beasts stumbling and riders pitched ahead. When the climb is over you turn aside to the south, and view the gully of Michmash along whose northern edge you have scrambled inland. It looks not like a valley, but a crack in rocks, hundreds of feet deep. The valley of Achor, next to the south of Michmash, presents an almost more dramatic appearance as you view its entrance from the Jordan foot-hills. It gapes on the plain, like the open mouth of some petrified monster.

The isolated hills of the northern territory are in their way as memorable as the gorges of the south. In Judea you cannot see the mountains for "the mountain." The whole land is one great elevated range, and the noticeable features of the district are the gorges that cut across it. Samaria, on the other hand, is a place of

valleys and of plains, and its mountains are seen as mountains. This fact finds its most striking instance in certain "Gilgals," or isolated cones standing free in the midst of plain, or cut off by circular valleys round their bases. The most perfect of these is that which bears the name of Gilgal, rising detached in the wide valley to the south-east of Jacob's Well.[1] It is in shape an almost perfect cone, whose gradual curve renders it very easy of ascent. The Hill of Samaria itself is another such "Gilgal," the centre of a splendid circular panorama of hills. Sanur, in the country of Judith and Holophernes, is a third, on a smaller scale, but with even wider panorama. North of Esdraelon, again a long ripple of mountains sweeps round at least one such Gilgal, leaving Sepphoris isolated on the peak of it. And Tabor itself might plausibly be counted in this class—Tabor the irrelevant, whose cone seems always to be peeping over the shoulder of some lower ridge, unlike any other landmark, commanding all the views eastward from the heights of Nazareth. These curious cones are in Palestine to some extent what the Righi is in Switzerland. With the exception of Tabor, they are but lesser heights; yet they give the widest mountain views, and seem to shape the land into a succession of circles, of which their summits are the centre-points.

The mountains of Israel are the characteristic features of her history as of her geography. In every part of Syria they are the companions of the journey. Great

[1] Cf. p. 15.



MOUNT TABOR





distant masses, or near crests of them, seem to accompany you as you move. And as you travel through the history of the land it is in the same companionship. The Jordan valley lies along the western side of the mountain range, a place of luxury and temptation. But Israel abides on the hills, sending down to it only the most degenerate of her children. It is a very striking fact that Jesus was tempted to sin for bread on the mountain almost within sight of Jericho, where the Herodians were sinning with surfeits of wine and rich meats. All that is truest to Israel and most characteristic of her at her best is on the hills They are the places of her war and of her worship. The Gilgals have almost all stood siege. All, or at least the most of them, have been fortified. On some of them the rude remains of ancient sacred circles, or the decayed steps of altars cut in the rock, may still be traced. Her enemies found by bitter experience that " her gods are gods of the hills." Her ark had its abode on the tableland at Shiloh or on the hill of Zion. Its history on the low ground was but a story of calamity ; it had to be sent up again to Kirjath-Jearim among the hills. Yet the heights of Israel stand for more than this blend of war and worship ; they were her home. All her greater towns nestle among them somewhere ; most of them stand on the summits, or just below them. It was a race of Highlanders that gave us our Bible—men whose home was on the heights.

Her wars, indeed, were everywhere, for it is a blood-

drenched land. Many of her battles were fought at the edge of the mountain-land, on the kopjes that run along the southern border of Esdraelon, or among the foot-hills near the mouth of the western gorges. There, or on the great plain, she met her invaders. But the heights were the scenes of battles in the last resort, and the gorges are associated with the advance and retreat of armed hosts, the rush of the invader and the headlong retreat of armies that had been surprised and routed from above.

Meanwhile, in the middle spaces, she fought her continuous battle with the desert and the sun for her daily bread. It is said that in Malta, where every possible spot is cultivated, the earth has been all imported, and that the Knights of Malta allowed no vessel to enter the harbour without paying dues in soil. The denuded hill-sides of Palestine, with their ruined heaps of stones that once built up terraces for cultivation, tell a similar story. On some hillsides the remains of sixty or even eighty such terraces may still be traced. In many places the valleys are rich in an altogether superfluous depth of fertile soil. But this did not suffice the inhabitants, and they built up the terraces along the southward slopes, in many places quite to the walls of their mountain villages. On not a few of these slopes labour must have actually created land, and men's hearts grown strong within them as they changed the rocks into gardens and the slopes of shingle into harvest fields.

CHAPTER IV

THE WATERS OF ISRAEL

Keeping in mind our view of Palestine as an oasis, we naturally turn at once to the thought of the waters that have retrieved it from the desert. By far the most conspicuous of these is the Jordan, flowing down a long course to its deep-dug grave in the Dead Sea. At whatever point we approach that great valley the eye is inevitably led along it northward to the white Hermon, whose great "breastplate" shines over all the land. That mountain, and the Lebanons of which it is the southern outpost, are the real makers of Palestine.

There was a beautiful poetry of Hermon which from earliest times made it a sacrament of sweet thoughts to Israel. Perhaps the sweetest thought it gave her was that of dew. In every part of that land of clear skies, a heavy dew lies upon the ground at sunrise. Poetic feeling, undertaking the work of science, interpreted this dew as Hermon's gift, so that "the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion" was "the dew of Hermon" (Psalm cxxxiii. 3). The meteorology is faulty, but the larger idea is true. The cool and glis-

tening snow-field, more than a hundred miles away from Zion, does indeed send out and receive again the waters that refresh the land in an endless round. "The Abana dies in the marsh of Ateibeh, yielding its spirit to the sun, as Jordan dies in the Dead Sea, and, rising into clouds again, both of them wafted to the snow-peaks where they were born, they pour down their old waters in a current ever new, in that circuit of life and death which God has ordained for all."[1]

So conspicuous are these two rivers that we almost need to remind ourselves that they are not the only waters of Israel. There are several perennial streams in Syria, of which something will be said presently; but the list of these by no means exhausts the stores of water in the land. Great stretches of the country are apparently waterless, especially in the south, and yet water is almost everywhere, underground. In many parts the soil and surface-rock are soft, lying on a hard bed-rock at various depths below. Accordingly we find that one of the most mysterious and characteristic features of the south country is its underground waters.[2] Springs and streamlets find their way through fissures or filter through porous stone to the harder rock below, and flow along subterranean channels there. Zangwill quotes an older authority for the somewhat startling statement that "the entire plain of Sharon seems to cover a vast subterranean river, and this inexhaustible source of wealth underlies the whole territory of the

[1] *The Rob Roy on the Jordan*, p. 129.

[2] Cf. *The Semites*, Robertson Smith, p. 97.



JERUSALEM.—THE POOL OF HEZEKIAH

This is an artificial reservoir excavated out of the rock; formerly it was of larger size, and extended under the Coptic Khan to the left of the picture. The domes and belfry-tower above this building are those of the Holy Sepulchre. Mount Scopas with "English House" on the ridge. Evening light.





Philistines." Putting the ear to any crack in the sunburnt clay of the surface, in certain parts, one may hear the subdued growl and murmur of the waters underneath. Trees flourish in places where there is no water apparent, their roots bathing in unseen streams, and drawing life and freshness from them. One can well understand the feelings of awe with which primitive people regarded these mysterious nether springs. They did not connect them with the idea of rain from above, as modern science does, but believed that they had forced their way up from "the Great Deep," which was supposed to underlie the earth, and into which the roots of the mountains were thrust far down like gigantic anchors of the world. Some of the rivers of Damascus are also underground, "and may often be seen and heard through holes in the surface."[1] Jerusalem is a waterless city, whose famous pools are tanks for rain-water. Its one spring is that strange intermittent one which overflows from the Well of the Virgin through Hezekiah's aqueduct to the Pool of Siloam. Yet there are legends that beneath the sacred rock which the mosque of Omar covers there is a subterranean torrent; and that the rushing of hidden waters has been heard at times below the massive stones of the Damascus Gate of the city.

These underground waters have given to Palestine a still more interesting feature at the points where her greatest rivers rise. This is the sudden emergence of full-bodied streams from the ground. These rivers

[1] *Rob Roy*, p. 102.

have, so to speak, no infancy. Their springs are not little toy fountains with trickling rivulets. They bound into the world full-grown, with a rush and fury which is perhaps unparalleled in any other land. This inspiring and suggestive phenomenon has not been without its effect on the national thought and imagination. In the midst of one of the most gloriously forceful passages of Isaiah (chap. xxxv.) the vigour and impetuousness of the prophecy finds its climax in the sudden leap of waters which "break out" in the wilderness, and which are described in the same breath as the first glad leap of the restored lame man, leaping "as an hart." When Moses in his blessing of the tribes speaks of Dan "leaping from Bashan," he refers to that wonderful spot where Jordan, in the tribe of Dan, leaps up from below Hermon. Matthew Arnold, had he chanced to think of it, might have seen in his delight in full and rushing streams another link connecting him with the Hebrew race with which he so quaintly claims affinity.

The south country keeps its rivers for the most part below ground, though even there considerable streams suddenly break out. Conder describes deep blue pools of fresh water near Antipatris which "well up close beneath the hillock surrounded by tall canes and willows, rushes and grass."[1] Yet the greatest outbursts are in the north. One traveller describes a river-source in Lebanon as an abyss of seething black waters, into which he rolled large stones, only to see them presently

[1] *Tent Work*, p. 120.

reappear, flung up like corks from the depths. At one of its sources the Abana bursts from the masonry of some ancient temples "a pure and copious river, rushing into light at once as if free."

It is at Hermon that we find the true centre of the water supply of Palestine. Parts of it are under snow all the year round, and it gives off some thirty streams flowing in every direction. Not one of these streams reaches the Mediterranean. They flow forth only to evaporate sooner or later in some inland morass or sea, and to return in vapour that will be condensed again by the snows of Hermon. Conder describes one of these in the north, whose water "rushes out suddenly with a roaring noise from a cavern" in winter, and transforms the plain below into a lake. But the great work of Hermon is the Jordan, two of whose three sources leap up from its roots. The most striking of these is that of Banias, which Jewish tradition names as one of the three springs of Palestine which "remained not closed up after the Flood." On the crest of a spur of Hermon stands the ruined castle of Subeibeh, one of the noblest ruins in the world. From the castle you descend 1400 feet to the village of Banias, the ancient Caesarea Philippi. The descent, over basalt boulders whose interstices are filled for the most part with thorn-bushes, is said in the guide-books to be practicable for horses. One wonders how long the horses are supposed to survive the journey! The view across and down the Jordan valley is indescribably grand. Near the foot the path curves round the top of a precipice and doubles back on a

lower level to a white-washed Mohammedan weli, or praying-house. Just below, as you look down from the weli, a large cavern is seen, with niches beautifully carved in the rocks beside it. On one of these niches is the inscription "To Pan and the Nymphs," and on another the names "Augustus and Augustina." Here, most likely on the site of a prehistoric holy place of the Semites, stood the Roman temple which Herod built in honour of Augustus. Nor is it wonderful that these and so many other faiths have counted this a sacred place; for Jordan used to pour forth from that cavern, clear and full-bodied. Now the old cave-channel is choked up with debris, and Jordan forces its way to light in many smaller fountains among the stones and earth of the open space below, which is coloured by long trails of slime. Within a few yards the streams unite in a rich green pool, with reeds and luxuriant water-growth. The second source of Jordan is even more impressive. It is at Tell-el-Kadi, some two miles west from Banias. On the western side of this Tell, on which there are traces and ruins of an ancient city, there is a thicket of rank undergrowth, from beneath whose lowest branches and creepers the river suddenly appears, spreads immediately into a wide pool, and within a hundred yards is racing violently south in foaming rapids. The pool was reported to be bottom-less, but the irrepressible little canoe *Rob Roy* was launched upon its boiling waters, and the depth proved to be but five feet!

Jordan is a river worth much study, interesting from



THE GOLDEN OR BEAUTIFUL GATE FROM THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

The well is in the upper part of the Garden of Gethsemane. Some of the very ancient olives and cypresses growing at the lower level of the Garden are seen over the boundary wall.

Across the valley of the Kidron the prospect is bounded by the Eastern Wall of the Temple Area, in the centre of which appears the Golden Gate.





every point of view—geographical, historical, religious.[1] Changing in colour, as the floods wash down their various soils to it, it tumbles and rushes south through a stretch of some 137 miles without a single cascade till it sweeps, with strong and level current, into the Dead Sea. At Banias its height above the Mediterranean is about 1000 feet, but the extraordinary valley is chiselled on a running slope down to the depths of the earth. Clouds have been seen sweeping above its bed 500 feet below the level of the ocean. The Dead Sea level is 1290 feet below the Mediterranean ; its bottom, at the deepest part, is as deep again. Spanned by a few bridges, of which only one or two are now entire, the river's course is for the most part through solitudes without inhabitants, or tenanted but by a few half-savage people. The valley is alternately wide and narrow, swelling out in five broad expanses, of which the two northern ones are lakes, and the three southern plains. From Banias to the last confluence of the different head-streams is a distance of some seven miles through green land. Soon after that point it loses itself in a vast forest of impenetrable papyrus canes growing in shallow water, from which it emerges in a little lake or clear space about half a mile lower. Then it flows, a solemn and glassy stream, for some three miles and a half down a sharp-edged lane whose perpendicular banks are tall papyrus canes, till it glides silently out, a hundred feet in breadth, into Lake

[1] The *Rob Roy* has contributed gallantly to its exploration. To her captain's book this chapter is under many obligations.

Huleh. From Huleh to the Sea of Galilee is ten miles, along the greater part of which the river tears through a narrow gorge. Emerging clear and broad from the Sea of Galilee it soon begins its innumerable windings. A few streams flow into it perennially from east and west, and countless torrents after rain. In the north it quickens a poisonous soil into rank vegetation, and spreads its superfluous waters on steaming swamps, full of malaria. Opposite Shechem its clay is good for moulding, and the *tells* which break the level are for the most part apparently the remains of old brickfields or brass foundries. As it descends to the broadest of its plains at Jericho the valley falls into three distinct levels. From the hills a flat expanse of desolation spreads towards the river, till it falls in steep banks of 150 to 200 feet to the lower level of the "trench" down which the river flows in flood. Finally, in the centre of this lies the ordinary channel, at whose banks the trees and undergrowth seem to crouch and kneel over the sullen brown stream.

There are other perennial rivers in Syria, but their courses are short. The Litany (Leontes) rises between the Lebanons a short distance north of the highest springs of Jordan. For many miles the two flow in parallel courses, divided only by the little ridge of Jebel-es-Zoar. But before Jordan has passed its new springs at Banias, the Litany has swept to the west in a sharp right angle, to pour itself into the ocean north of Tyre. It is a fine stream, yellow with rich loam, but its bed is in the sharp angle of valleys whose

sides remind one of the Screes of Wastwater. Its descent is so rapid that even if there were meadows in the bottoms of its gorges, it would hurry past them to pour its treasure of water and of soil alike into the thankless sea. The Abana, rising in the same region as the springs of the other two, has a course of only some fifty miles. Kishon, which waters the Plain of Esdraelon, is certainly the most generous in the matter of cultivated fields, but it is also the most treacherous. Its fords are never certain, for great masses of sand and mud are shifted to and fro in the most unaccountable manner. The rest of the perennial rivers are either tributaries of the Jordan, companions of the Abana in its eastern course, or streams from Carmel or the central mountain range, whose short course to the Mediterranean is of little account.

As we think of these rivers flowing through a land which so sorely needs their help, we cannot but feel oppressed by a sense of waste that is almost tragic. There is no boat plying on any of them. Most are, indeed, far too rapid for that, but not everywhere. The guide-book speaks of a steamer plying on the lower reaches of Jordan; and the local story of oppression there — every district has its particular grievance—is of two boats that had been brought for the service of the monastery, and then confiscated by Government. The only boats of any kind we saw on fresh water between Hebron and Damascus were two on the Sea of Galilee, manned by Syrians in red jerseys,

on which the magic letters were inscribed, "COOK." In the old days it must have been very different. There is mention of a ferry-boat on the Jordan in 2 Sam. xix. 18, and in Christ's time there must have been a considerable fishing fleet on the lake. The trireme on the coins of Gadara reminds us of Roman vessels which sailed there for warlike purposes, and here and there you find a valley dammed across its breadth for the construction of an artificial lake, on which a *naumachia* or naval fight might add piquancy to the games. There is an island in the Dead Sea itself on which what are supposed to be ruins of a landing-stage are still visible, showing that long ago even these uncanny waters were not without their sailors. There used to be a wrecked boat in the Ateibeh marsh from which three men had been drowned. The wreck of another boat was still visible some years ago under the surface of Lake Huleh. These wrecks are but too truthfully symbolic of the fate of men's attempts to utilise the waters of Israel. The Abana, indeed, is utilised. Never was river so wholly taken possession of by a city as Abana by Damascus. She flows into it —right into the heart of it—and disappears underground; she is led captive into a thousand fountains in public streets and the courts of private houses; she is sent in a thousand little channels to irrigate the gardens which surround it. All the more pitiful is her ending in that wild and haunted morass of Ateibeh, where she yields up her waters to the desert and the sun.

The fate of Jordan seems still more tragic. In the



THE LAKE OF GALILEE, LOOKING NORTH FROM TIBERIAS

The road at the left of the picture is the main road to the north from Tiberias. The land between the road and the lake is in cultivation as a fruit garden. Across the lake to the right, where the mountains slope down to the water, lies the village of Capernaum. Bethsaida is immediately above the acacia tree in the centre of the picture. Time, forenoon.





far north his waters are indeed utilised to some small extent for irrigation, but for the vastly longer part of his course he does nothing but flee through the wilderness to the bitter sea in the south. Dr. Ross has strikingly summed up Jordan's career in the words: "So, in a valley which is thirsting for water, the Jordan rushes along to an inglorious end." Yet that is only one aspect of the matter. Jordan gave Israel her last story of Elijah and her first of Christ's ministry. Neither association is of the kindly sort which a nation's sentiment usually gathers round its rivers. There is, as it were, the glitter of fire from the prophet's departure for ever lending to these brown waters a sort of unearthly grandeur. Those fiery horses which bathed their feet here take the place of the gentle memories of generations of lovers or little children. Yet that is true to the spirit of the river. To Israel it stood for a very forceful and practical fact. Their first crossing of Jordan began their national life in Palestine and cut them off from the desert. So, to the end, the Jordan stood for this to them, and that was much. Jordan created no great city as Abana created Damascus; but it streamed down the side of the east, flinging, as it were, a great arm round the land, claiming it from the desert, and proclaiming this to be oasis and the home of men. Disraeli characteristically writes: "All the great things have been done by the little nations. It is the Jordan and the Ilyssus that have civilised the modern races." And truly it is the Jordan that is in great part responsible for the Hebrew

share in that civilisation — not by his material gifts, indeed, which were ever ungenerously given and carelessly gathered, but by his sentiment of isolation and aloofness from the rest of the Eastern world, to which we owe much that is best in our inheritance from Israel.

For the homelier uses and gentler thoughts of Israel's waters we must turn to the lesser fountains and streams. There is, it is true, much disillusionment for the sentimentalist even here. Remembering the sweet music in which they have been sung— the "Song of the Well" ("Spring up, O Well, sing ye unto it!") or the "gently flowing waters" of the 23rd Psalm— one expects the perfection of purity and freshness. Early tradition has pictured the angel Gabriel meeting with Mary at the village spring of Nazareth; nor is that the only Syrian fountain by which the footsteps of angels have been traced. All the more trying is the reality. Hideously tattooed women squat by the sweetest springs, fling filthy garments into them, and beat them with stones till the stream flows brown below them; or they toil wearily a mile or two away from their villages to fill the heavy water-pots, beasts of burden rather than mothers in Israel. Of cleanliness the natives have not the remotest idea. We used to see them filling their vessels from a stream where our horses were being washed down after their day's ride, and they seemed on principle to choose a spot just below that where the horse was standing. Often the water seemed calculated to assuage hunger rather than thirst. The natives drank it freely when it was mere



THE FOUNTAIN OF THE VIRGIN AT NAZARETH

This spring, which is at the extreme southern end of the village, is in an arched recess of modern Turkish construction.

The hour is about seven in the morning, when water is drawn by the villagers for the day's consumption. The brilliancy and variety of costume are peculiar to the women of Nazareth.

Across the road to the left is a hut covered with boughs, the leaves of which have turned brown. Such huts are common in this district, to afford shelter to the watchmen who guard the crops.





mud in solution ; and even when it was clear, the glass bottles on the table sometimes presented the appearance of lively and well-stocked aquariums. Our squeamishness was unintelligible even to our camp-servants, who drank in defiance large draughts of the water we refused. The landmarks of the hot journey are the pools where one may bathe, and the first sight of Elisha's Fountain and the Well of Harod is refreshing to remember still. But one touch of the bottom mud sufficed to bring to the surface a gas which sent us post-haste to our stores of quinine—and yet the deliciousness of the plunge was worth the risk!

The spell of the fountains remains in spite of all, and no traveller wonders that the ancient men revered them as sacred places. Israel exulted in the forcefulness of her larger rivers, but hardly knew their kindlier resources. Her affection was kept for those wells and streamlets which flowed past her doors and made glad her cities. It is a land of dried-up torrent-beds, and no river made glad any City of God except at the seasons when God had filled it with His rain. In such a land a wayside well like Jacob's counts for more than our Western imagination can realise. Property in water was an older institution than property in land. These wayside wells and "sealed fountains" refreshed men from time immemorial in the very presence of their enemies. They were the choicest riches of their owners. The journey from south to north leads one ever more frequently in among such springs, but many towns of the south are built at places where there is abundance

of them. Hebron has twelve little fountains ; Gaza fifteen. In Samaria they burst forth in every valley, and the vale of Nablus is a net-work of rivulets, springing, it is said, from no fewer than eighty sources. In Galilee they are still more abundant. At Khan Minyeh, supposed by many to be the site of the ancient Capernaum, the ruins are mostly those of aqueducts, and springs break forth and stream in little rivers everywhere.

The beauty and refreshing coolness of such fountains is very great. The dripping walls of the Khan Minyeh aqueducts are covered with magnificent bunches of maidenhair, whose fronds were the broadest we had ever seen. The Well of Harod, close by the stream where Gideon tested his soldiers, is one of the loveliest spots imaginable. There is a little cave, where the pebbles shine up blue through the shallow water ; ferns grow in its crannies, and at the side a clear spring, two feet broad and five inches deep, splashes into the pool from a recess entirely hidden by hanging maidenhair. Nor is the natural beauty of these springs their only charm. When one remembers the days of old through which they flowed, and the men who stooped to drink of them so along ago, all that was most sacred and most heroic to one's childhood lives again, and speaks to the heart. Ay ! and to the conscience too ; for these were the springs that gave to Bible men their metaphors of a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness ; this is the land in which it sprang up and from which it has flowed forth with cleansing and refreshment for the whole earth.



THE STREAM FLOWING FROM THE SPRING OF ELISHA

The hills to the right, which lie to the south-west, are the Judean mountains running down to the Dead Sea. The more distant hills are the mountains of Moab. Sunset effect in May.





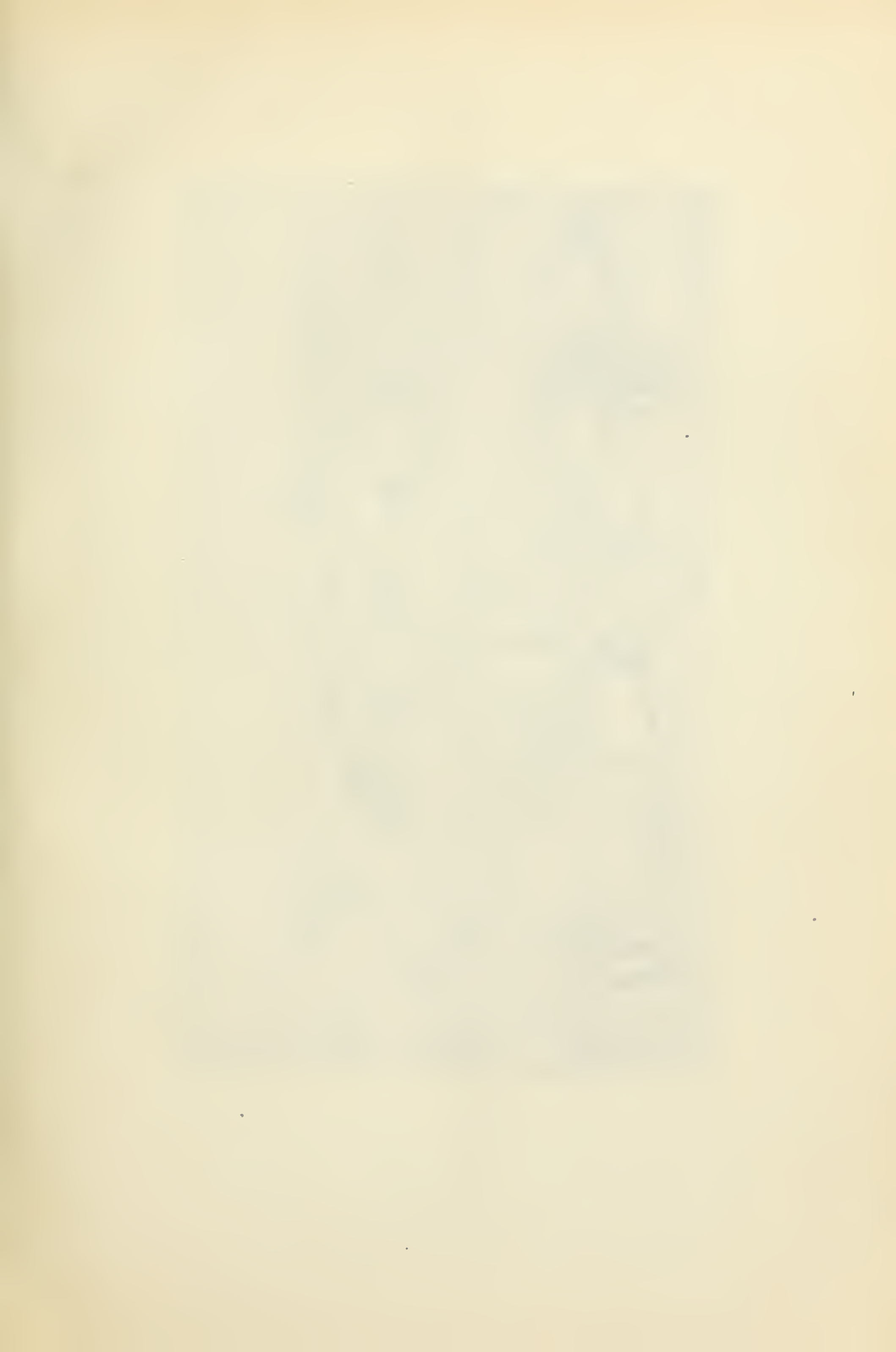
CHAPTER V

BROWN VILLAGES, WHITE TOWNS, AND A GREY CITY

NOTHING could better illustrate the completeness of the change through which Israel passed when she exchanged a nomadic for a settled life than the great importance which the idea of *the city* has in the Bible. Kinglake describes the Jordan as "a boundary between the people living under roofs and the tented tribes that wander on the farther side." The very name of "city," applied to these grotesque little hamlets, shews how seriously they took themselves, and compels an amused respect for so mighty a little self-importance, for a "King" of that time might be compared with a chairman of parish council to-day. The idea of the city became more and more part of the religion of Israel as Jerusalem rose to religious as well as civil importance. To them God was a city-dweller, and there is an eastern saying about lonely wanderers journeying homeless towards the sunset, that they are "going to God's gate."

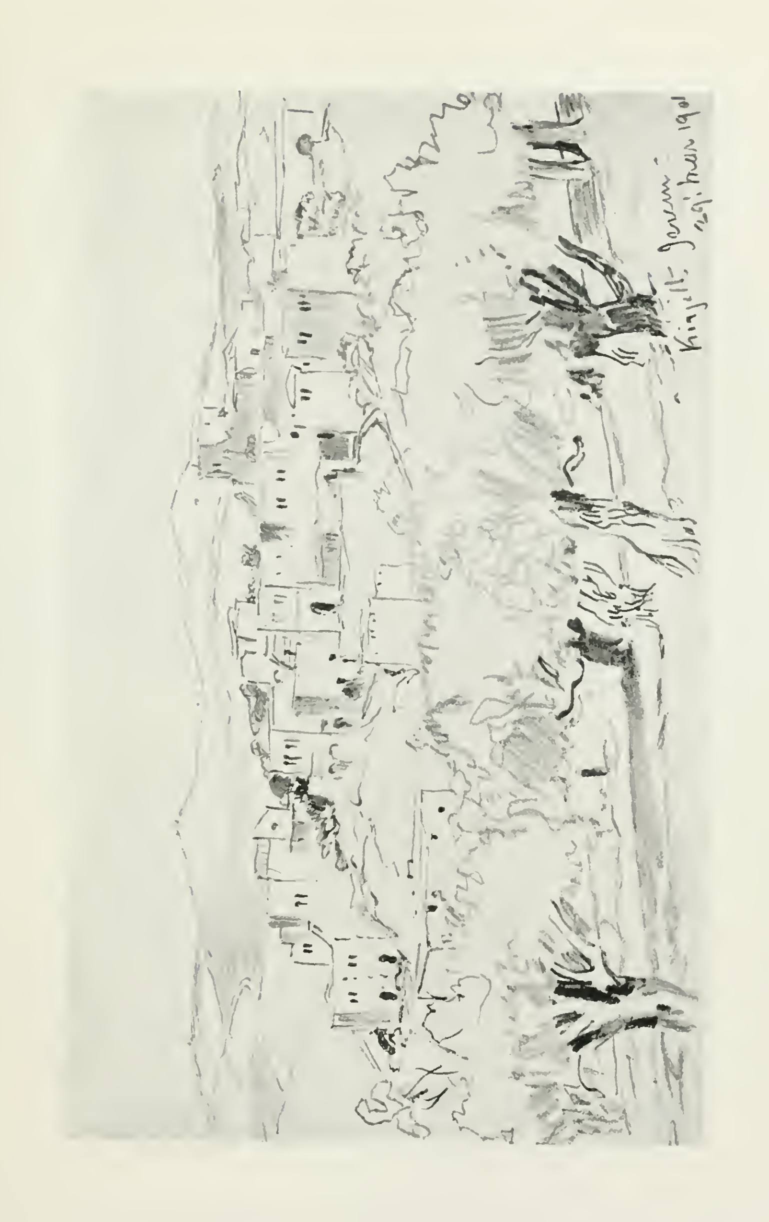
The changing history of the land has passed it through many phases, and no doubt there are far wider

differences between the centuries in respect of men's dwellings than in respect of those natural features of the land which we have been studying in the preceding pages. This chapter will describe present conditions. And yet in spite of changes the aspect of things must be pretty much what it always was. Men gathered into cities on some strongly fortified hill for purposes of war, or around some holy place for worship, or in some fertile valley for safe agriculture ; and the sites thus chosen are retained for the most part. With the exception of the wandering tents, which are occasionally seen throughout the land, there is hardly a solitary dwelling in Palestine which is not a ruin. And the want of good roads, together with the uncertain government, seems still to keep the village communities more apart than they are in most countries. Each village has a character and a reputation of its own, and cherishes views regarding its neighbours which it is not slow to impart either to them or to foreigners. The colour of these townships divides them into the three classes of our title. Damascus and Beyrout are beyond the scope of the present description—Damascus, the greyest city in the world so far as age is concerned ; and Beyrout, the over-grown white town upon which the ends of the world are come, leaving it little individual character of its own. Keeping to the south of these, we have the clearly marked division, with little overlapping. A brown village may indeed have a white church or mosque gleaming from its bosom, and the walls of some towns besides Jerusalem are grey ;





KIRJATH-JEARIM





yet in the main it is a land of brown villages, white towns, and one grey city.

The villages are *very* brown—"dust-coloured," as they have been happily called. Seen from a distance they generally look inviting, but it takes the traveller no long time to believe that a near approach will certainly disillusionise him. They have many sorts of charm in the distance. Some of them are set up on the edge of a hill, and these seen from below present all the appearance of fortification, their flat roofs and perpendicular sides giving them an angular and military aspect. Others are surrounded by neatly walled and cultivated olive-yards which give the promise of a well-conditioned village. In the rare instances where trees are planted among the dwellings, the flat brown roofs seem to nestle among the branches in delightful contentment and restfulness. Where trees are absent there is generally a high cactus hedge, serving as an enclosing wall, which sets the village in a pleasant green. Even those hamlets which have about them no green of any kind are not uninviting, especially if they are built on a hill-slope. There is a peculiar formality and neatness given by irregular piles of flat-roofed buildings overlapping each other at different levels. But as you approach, all is disillusionment. The trees seem to detach themselves and stand apart in the untidy paths. The cactus hedge is repulsive, with its spiked pulpy masses and its bare and straggling roots. The brown walls seem to decay before your eyes, and the village

seen from within its own street changes to a succession of ruinous heaps of débris, with excavations into the mud of the hillside. If, as at Nain, there be a white-walled church or mosque in the place, it seems to stand alone in a long moraine of ruins. An acrid smell hangs upon the air, for the fuel is dried cakes of dung. These are plastered over the walls of low ovens into which the mud seems to swell in great blisters by the street-side. In some of these ovens crowds of filthy children and tattooed women are sitting, while the men loiter in idle rows along the house walls. When suddenly you say to yourself that this is Shunem, or this Nain, or Magdala, the disappointment is complete.

In some places the houses are built of stones gathered from the ancient ruins of the neighbourhood (Colonel Conder believes that in hardly any instance are the stones fresh quarried). Other houses consist simply of four walls of mud, with a roof of the same material laid upon branches set across. A small stone roller may be seen lying somewhere on the roof, for in heat the mud cracks and needs to be rolled now and then to keep the rain from leaking through. The sheikh, or headman of the village, has a better house—often the one respectable habitation in the place, but suggestive of a ruined tower at that. It is a two-storeyed building, whose great feature is the public hall, or reception-room, where local matters are discussed and strangers interviewed. There is no glass in the windows, and the strong sunlight deepens the gloom of the interiors to a rich brown darkness with points of high



WATER-CARRIER (SEATED FIGURE).
JERUSALEM





light and colour. The shade is precious in these sun-smitten places, and Conder narrates an incident which often recurs to mind in them. It was in the cave of the Holy House at Nazareth, the reputed home of Jesus in His boyhood. The visitor "observed to the monk that it was dark for a dwelling-house, but he answered very simply, 'The Lord had no need of much light.'" The rooms are almost bare of furniture, a bed and a few water-jars in a corner being sometimes the only objects visible. In some of them the floor space is divided into two levels, half the room being a platform two or three feet higher than the other half. On this platform the family lives, while the cattle occupy the lower part; and along the edge of the platform there are hollows in its floor, which serve as mangers for the beasts. No doubt it was in such a manger that Jesus was laid in Bethlehem.

The inhabitants of these villages are the Fellahin, of whom Conder has given so interesting a description.[1] He recognises in them a people of almost unmixed ancient stock. Distinct from Bedawin and from Turks, they are the "modern Canaanites," probably descendants of the original inhabitants whom Israel displaced. These were never quite exterminated; and although there have no doubt been many minor instances of the absorption of other breeds, yet in the main they remain very much as they were when they talked with Jesus in Aramaic, or even as they were in days much earlier than His. A slight enrichment

[1] *Tent Work*, chaps. xx., xxi.

to their lives has been made by each of the invaders, and reminiscences of Israel, Rome, the early Christians, the Crusaders, may be found blended with their Mohammedanism. But they are conservative to the last degree, and any radical change seems an impossibility among them. Many things contribute to this conservatism, among which perhaps the chief is the tradition of intermarriage between the inhabitants of the same village. Another factor is their extraordinary ignorance, combined with a pride no less remarkable. It would be difficult to find anywhere men so self-satisfied on such small capital of merit. A third cause of their immovableness is to be found in the usury and oppression by which they are held down; and even their local self-government—that *imperium in imperio* which prevails under the larger oppression of the Turk—keeps up, so far as it is allowed, the ancestral ways and thoughts. In one respect this conservatism of theirs is a gain to the world: it has preserved among them those habits of speech and manner with which the Bible has made us all so familiar; and it is to them, with all their faults, that we owe much of the "sacramental value" of Palestine travel.

As for their faults, no doubt they are many, but it is not for the passing stranger to attempt an estimate of their character. The most obvious lapses are sins of speech, and one always has the impression that the interpreter is toning down as he translates. One can see that property is insecure, and life by no means so sacred as in the West. One incident brought this home to

us vividly. Some of our party had been detained on an exploring excursion till after dark. When we asked a group of natives what could have become of them, the answer was more significant than reassuring, for they pointed with their fingers vertically downwards! It was not so bad as that, however, for we soon heard revolver shots, and answered them. We fired into a field, aiming at a large stack of corn to prevent accidents. Conceive our horror when a silent figure in flowing robes rose from the centre of the stack! He was spending the night there to keep his property from thieves. For the rest, it is their laziness that strikes one most forcibly. Their agriculture is as leisurely as it is primitive. They sit while reaping, and thresh by standing upon boards studded with flints, which oxen draw over the threshing-floors. Their ploughs are but iron-shod sticks which scratch the surface of the field. In outlandish districts they are described as mere savages, but we saw little to justify such a criticism. They are uncompromisingly dirty everywhere, yet their food is simple, and they appear in the main to be healthy enough. At first one's impression of them is of universal gloom, sulky and contemptuous; but the mood soon changes if you stay among them for a little time, and the knit brows relax to a smiling childishness.

Of white towns, with a population between 3000 and 3500, there are about a dozen in Palestine, of which, excluding Damascus and Beyrout, the best known are Haifa and Acre, Tyre and Sidon, Tiberias, Jenin,

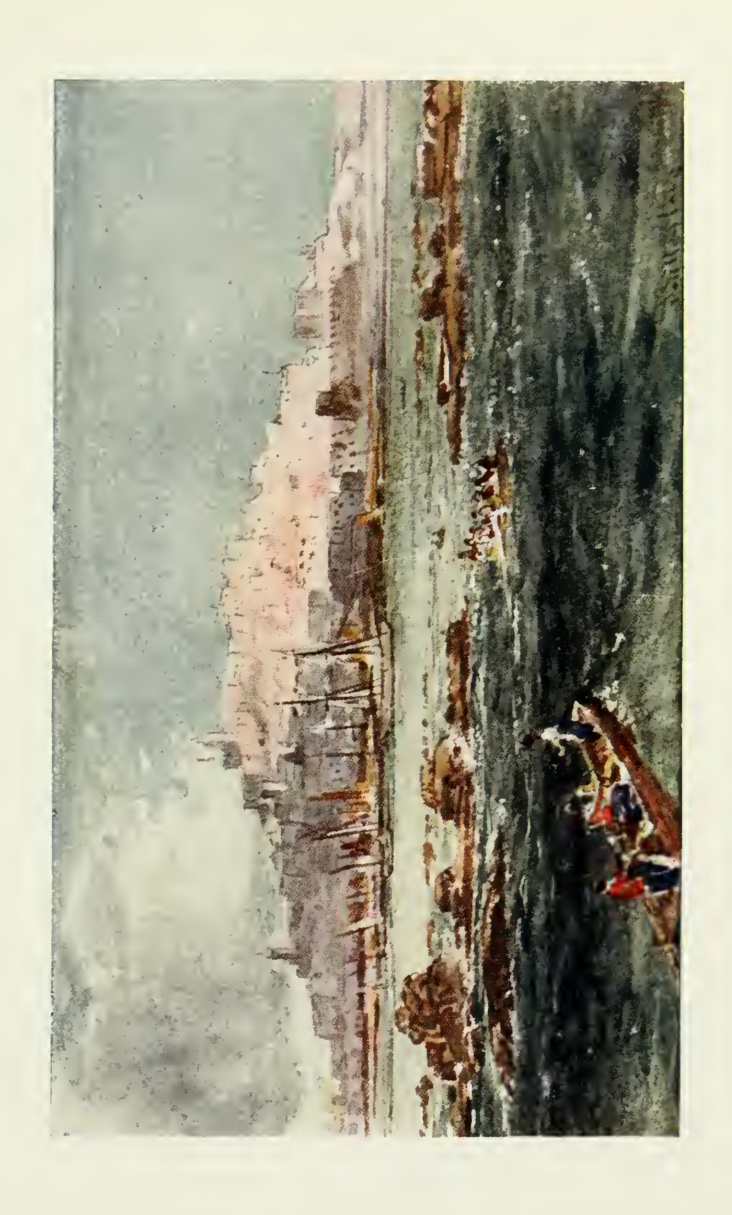
Nablus, Bethlehem, Hebron, Gaza, Jaffa. They shine from far as you approach them. Some, like Jenin, gleam most picturesquely from among palm trees ; others, like Nazareth seen from Jezreel, shew like stars of white in high mountain valleys ; and yet others, like Bethshan, appear " like white islands in the mouth of an estuary." The nearer view of Nazareth, when the hill has been climbed and the town suddenly reveals itself, is one of rare beauty. You are looking down into an oval hollow full of clean and bright houses. Many cypress trees and spreading figs enrich the prospect, and the whole picture is most pleasing. Bethlehem, again, has a picturesqueness that is all its own. Approaching it from the south, the track turns sharply into a valley whose end is entirely blocked by a lofty hill, covered along its whole length with shining white masonry set far up against the sky. It looks trim and newly finished ; and one hardly knows whether to be delighted or vexed that Bethlehem should be so workmanlike a place.

But it is the sea-coast towns which are the most characteristic of their class. Tyre is a surprisingly living and wide-awake place still, and the name recalls ever some vista of blue sea with ships seen through the white arches or rich foliage that decorate the town's western front. Jaffa is still more surprising. It is usual to embark at Port Said late in the evening, and when you wake in the morning and find the steamer at anchor, the first sight of Palestine that greets you is Jaffa, framed in the brass circle of the port-hole—a very perfect and brilliant little picture. The town is set well up, a conical





JOPPA FROM THE SEA





hill of sparkling colour, backed, as we first saw it, by cloudless Syrian sky, into which it ran its two minarets. It was larger than we had imagined, and much loftier, with a very bold and gaily tilted edge-line—a city set on its hill, and with a mighty consciousness of being so set, like Coventry Patmore's old English cottage. Dark-leaved trees, red roofs, and occasional jewel-like points of green, where copper cupolas have been weathered, light up the picture into one of the most ideal of its kind.

Within, the white towns shew a strange mixture of splendour and of sordidness. The streets are aggressively irregular, and the whole impresses one as at once ancient and unfinished. The wider spaces are full of colour and of noise, and the houses which surround them are a patchwork of all manner of buildings, with smaller structures leaning against their sides, and gaudy awnings of ragged edge protecting doorways from the sun. Where the street narrows, it is filled with crowds of men, women, and children, and laden donkeys pushing them aside as they pass along. There are lanes, also, in deep shadow, with buttresses and long archways converting them into high and narrow tunnels. The shopkeepers in these lanes sit behind their piles of merchandise and converse in shrill voices with neighbours on the other side, not six feet away. The whole appearance of the town is that of close-huddled dwellings, which have squeezed themselves into as little space as possible, and have been forced to expand upwards for want of lateral room.

These towns are the mingling-places of Syria — crucibles of its national life, in which new and composite races are being molten. One or two of them, like Nablus and Hebron, are inhabited chiefly by a fanatical Moslem population, and in these life stagnates. But the others are open to the world. In the past, long before the modern stream of travellers came, this process was going on. In very early times the towns were recruited by the neighbouring Canaanites and Arabs. They were, as they still are, so insanitary that if it were not for such additions their population would soon die out. In Christ's time the Greek and Roman world poured itself into them; then came the long train of Christian pilgrims; after that the Crusader hosts. Each of these, and many other incursions, have helped to mix the race of townsfolk. In Bethlehem and elsewhere there are many descendants of the Crusaders, whose fair hair and complexion tells its own tale. But the mingling of races has gone on with quite a new rapidity during the last few decades. Trade and travel have combined to force the West upon the East. Circassians, Kurds, Turks, Jews, Africans, Cypriotes have settled there. Travellers who have twice visited the land, with an interval of some years between their visits, are struck by the sudden and sweeping change. Even the passing visitor cannot fail to perceive it. The villagers remain apart, intermarrying within the village or with neighbouring Fellahin. The townspeople bring their brides from other towns, and sometimes from other nations. Many kinds of imported goods are exposed for sale in the

bazaars. There are parts of Damascus where nothing is sold that was not made in Europe. The habits of the West are also invading towns. Intoxicating liquors are freely sold, and in Nazareth there are now no fewer than seventeen public-houses. "Paris fashions"—probably belated—are ousting the ancient customs. Tattooing is quite out of fashion among the women of the towns, and knives and forks have penetrated native houses even in Hebron. The traveller comes into contact with the townspeople far less fully than with the villagers. In the towns everybody is minding some business or other of his own, and the stranger meets with the residenter merely as buyer with seller. Once only did we see the interior of a town house, and that visit confirmed the impression of a new and composite life very remarkably. It was in Tyre. An agreeable native, who had brought some curiosities for sale, invited us to go home with him and inspect his stock. The house was in a narrow street, but the rooms were large. His wife sat near the window smoking a nargileh, her eyebrows painted black, and her face heavily powdered and rouged. The room was crowded with furniture. There were a sofa and two European beds with mosquito curtains; a new English wardrobe of carved walnut, with a large mirror; a kitchen dresser covered with dinner dishes of the customary European kind. Dry-goods boxes were drawn forth from under the beds and the sofa, and pasteboard boxes from drawers and shelves, all filled with the most indescribable medley of curiosities from rifled tombs. Bracelets, tear-bottles,

ear-rings came to light in rapid succession. Finally, a square foot of lead-work appeared—part of a leaden winding-sheet which had recently been torn off an ancient corpse in a sarcophagus—a heavy shroud, finely ornamented with deep-moulded garlands and figures. Our hosts were good-humoured and pleasant people, who conducted the conversation in some five different languages, and appeared to combine in themselves and their properties several centuries of human life.

The grey city of Jerusalem stands unique among the towns of Palestine. With the brown villages it has nothing in common. The immense variety of its buildings, with their domes, flat terraces, minarets, and sloping roofs, distinguishes it at once from the rectangular masses of the villages. As if on purpose to emphasise the contrast, one of these villages has set itself right opposite the city across a narrow valley. Looking from the southern wall of the Haram enclosure, this village of Siloam is seen sprawling along the opposite hillside, a mere drift of square hovels seen across some fields of artichokes. Nothing could appear more miserable; inferiority is confessed in every line of it.

More might be said for the description of Jerusalem as the largest of the white towns. It is, like them, a centre where races mingle; indeed it is *the* centre of such mingling. All roads lead to it from north, south, east, and west; and when one suddenly comes upon one of those old Roman roads which



SILOAM FROM UNDER THE SOUTH-EAST CORNER OF THE WALL OF THE TEMPLE AREA

THE sloping ground in front is the *débris* of ancient Jerusalem ; the original surface of the rock is about 70 feet below.

The lower road leads to the Fountain of the Virgin ; the upper road passes below the walls to the Moghrebins' and Zion Gates. The Judean hills in the distance.



Siloam from under
S.E. corner of Wall
Jerusalem
8 June 1901



make for Jerusalem with such purposeful and grim directness over the Judean mountains, one realises that this has been the centre and mingling-place of nationalities for many centuries. Yet on the spot an obvious distinction is felt at once. There are two Jerusalems: the old one within the walls, and a new one spreading on the open ground to the west and north. This "new Levantine city side by side with the old Oriental city" is quite a modern place. When Stanley wrote his *Sinai and Palestine* it was unsafe to inhabit houses outside the walls. Now such houses are clustered together to the west in a city which is actually larger than the enclosed one, and whose rows of shops are hardly distinguishable from those of Western Europe. A strange medley its buildings are! The best sites are occupied by the great Russian Cathedral and Hospice, white-walled and leaden-roofed. Beyond these, embedded in Jewish "colonies," are the European consulates, with a Syrian Orphanage and an English Agricultural Settlement farther up the slope. The Tombs of the Kings lie to the north, in all their desolation, and the still more desolate Mound of Ashes which is supposed by some to be a relic of Temple sacrifices; but these are next neighbours to the Dominican monastery, the Bishop's house, and the house of that curious body of Americans known as the "Overcomers"; while on the hill, not a mile above them, is an English villa. All this and much else pours itself into the city and mingles in the streets with the very composite life already dwelling there.

Just at the foot of the hill which Gordon identified as Calvary, while Turkish bugles were blowing from the fort, we saw two Syrians engaged in rough horse-play, a party of Americans and English riding, some tonsured and cowled monks on foot, and a travelling showman with an ape clinging to him in terror of a tormenting crowd of Jews and Mohammedans ; while poor women, unconscious of any part in so strange a tableau, were returning to the city with full waterpots on their heads.

Yet in Jerusalem all this makes a different impression from that of other towns. The mingling of races here is but, as it were, the surface appearance of a far more wonderful fact. From the days of Solomon, Israel centralised her life in Jerusalem. On that hill the mountainland seems to gather itself as in a natural centre, typical and representative of the whole. There the nation centred its life also, in "the mountain throne, and the mountain sanctuary of God." Jeroboam's attempt to decentralise cost the nation dear ; but in spite of that attempt the centralisation took effect, and made her the most composite of cities from the first. All ends of the earth meet here as in a focus. Laden camels of the Arameans from the far East are making for the city, and ships flying like a cloud of homing doves to their windows are bearing precious freights to her port. History and religion are compressed within the walls. On the spot no one can forget the ancient geography which regarded Jerusalem as the centre of the earth, with Hell vertically below, and the island of



SUNRISE FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

The view is taken from the traditional site where Christ wept over the City of Jerusalem.

The shadow of the Mount of Olives falls across the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Kidron). The East Wall of the Temple Area with the Mosques of Omar and El Aksa, and the city of Jerusalem behind them in sunlight. The ruddy glow which tips the cypresses to the left in the foreground falls on the end of the village of Siloam and the Judean hills in the distance.

In the foreground Mohammedans are reciting the morning prayer. In the Valley of Jehoshaphat, behind the figure in yellow, may be noticed the Tomb of Absalom.





Purgatory its antipodes, and Heaven's centre overhead. In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre they shew a flattened ball in a little hollow place as the centre of the world. As in some other cases of faulty science, an imaginative mind may discover here a happy truth beneath the error. The composite life of Jerusalem without the walls is but of yesterday, that within the walls is hoary with age.

We have called it "a grey city," and even in respect of colour this is a true name. Not that there is any one colour of Jerusalem. In the varying lights of sunrise, noon, afternoon, and evening, its colour changes. At one time it hangs, airy and dreamlike, over the steep bank of the Valley of Jehoshaphat; at another time it seems to sit solid on its rock, every roof and battlement picked out in photographic clearness; again, in the twilight of evening, all is sombre with rich purple shadows. There are spots of colour, too, which break its monotonous dull hue. The Mosque of Omar, with its faint metallic greenish colour, stands in contrast to everything, and makes a background of the city for its isolated beauty. There is another dome, that of the Synagogue of the Ashkenazim, whose colour is a lustrous blue-green, shining over the city almost luminously. White minarets and spires are seen here and there, and a few red-tiled roofs have found place within the walls. Several spots are softened by the foliage of trees, and the pools, whose edges are formed of picturesque and irregular house-sides, catch and intensify the colours in their rich reflections. Yet, in spite of all that, Jerusalem is grey.

The walls are grey with a touch of orange in it. The houses, massed and huddled close within, are grey with a touch of blue. They are built roughly, the stones divided by broad seams of mortar, and most of them in their humble way conform to the fashion set by the Mosque of Omar and the Holy Sepulchre, and are domed. But the domes of ordinary houses are far from shapely, and suggest the fancy that the scorching sun has blistered the flat roofs.

By far the best view of Jerusalem is that which is seen from the Mount of Olives, as one approaches the city by the hill-road from Bethany. Her environs are of interest from many associations—there, on the Mount of Offence, Solomon offered sacrifices to idols ; yonder, on the hill of Scopus, the main body of Titus' troops was posted ; here, near where we stand, is the place of the agony in Gethsemane. For many days one might go round about the city, every day gaining new knowledge of its story. But what the first eye-shot gives is this : a sharp angle formed by the two valleys of Jehoshaphat and Hinnom ; steep banks rising from their bottoms to the walls, which they overlap in an irregular and wavy line ; within the walls, glancing back from the angle which they form above the junction of the valleys, the eye runs up a gradually rising expanse of close-packed building, which is continued more sparsely in the long rolling slope beyond, to the ridge of Scopus in the north, and to the distant sweep of long level mountain-line in the west. It is as if the whole city had slidden down and



JERUSALEM FROM THE TRADITIONAL SPOT ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES WHERE CHRIST WEPT OVER THE CITY

The hour is just after sunset. A purple shadow falls over the Valley of Jehoshaphat and the city from the Judean hills to the west. Behind the cypresses is Siloam. Over the south-east corner of the Wall of the Temple Area rise the dome and roof of the Mosque el Aksa, above which is the Hill of Zion, with the minaret of the Tomb of David.





been caught by that great angle of wall just before it precipitated itself into the gorges.

To see the grey city rightly, and feel how grey it is, you must view it across these gorges. The more distant environs are detached from the city. They are cultivated in patches, and dotted with modern buildings of various degrees of irrelevance. But these are mere accidents, which the place seems to ignore. The gorges themselves are part and parcel of the city, and they stand for the overflow of her sad and desolate spirit. Their sides are banks of rubbish—the wreckage and débris of a score of sieges, the accumulation of three thousand years. You look from the lower pool of Siloam in the valley of Hinnom, up a long dreary slope of dark grey rubbish, down which a horrible black stream of liquid filth trickles, tainting the air with its stench. Far off above you stands the wall, which in old days enclosed the pool. Here the city seems to have shrunk northwards, as if in some horror of conscience. The Field of Blood and the Hill of Evil Counsel are just across the gorge to the south. The valleys are full of tombs, those on the city side for the most part Mohammedan, while the lower slopes of Olivet are paved with the flat tombstones of Jews.

What a stretch of history unrolls itself to the imagination of him who lingers on the sight of Jerusalem! The boundaries seem to dwindle, till that which stands there is the old grey battle-beaten fortress of the Jebusites, the last post held by her enemies against Israel. David conquers it, and the procession

of priests and people bring up to its gate the ark, for the celebration of whose entrance tradition has claimed the 24th Psalm. A new city rises, and falls, and rises again, through more than twenty sieges and rebuildings. Assyrians, Babylonians, Romans, Moslems, Crusaders batter at its gates. The level of the streets rises through the centuries, till now the traveller walks on a pavement thirty or forty feet above the floor of the ancient city. To discover the old foundations, the explorers of our time have sunk shafts which at some parts of the wall touch bottom 120 feet below the present surface. Far below the slighter masonry of the present wall, with its battlemented Turkish work, lie the huge stones of early days, some of which bear still the marks of Phœnician masons.[1]

The gates, of course, are modern, though in some of them there are immense stones of very ancient date, whose rustic work the Turkish builders have cut away, and scored the flat surface with imitation seams to make them match the small square stones of the building above. Yet the positions of the ancient gates are not difficult to fix, and modern ones do duty for some of them. Others are built up with solid masonry,

[1] They are cut with a cross-chiselled margin, and rough outstanding rustic work in the centre. Their size and weight are enormous. One writer, whose sense of humour is hardly equal to his knowledge of Scripture, in describing them is carried away into the statement that "the Jewish architects, taught by their Phœnician neighbours, bestowed special care upon the corners of their great buildings. They show a finish, a solidity, and choice of material superior to other parts. . . . And how beautifully expressive is the language of the Psalmist, 'our daughters are corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace'—one of the corner-stones of this angle weighs over a hundred tons"!



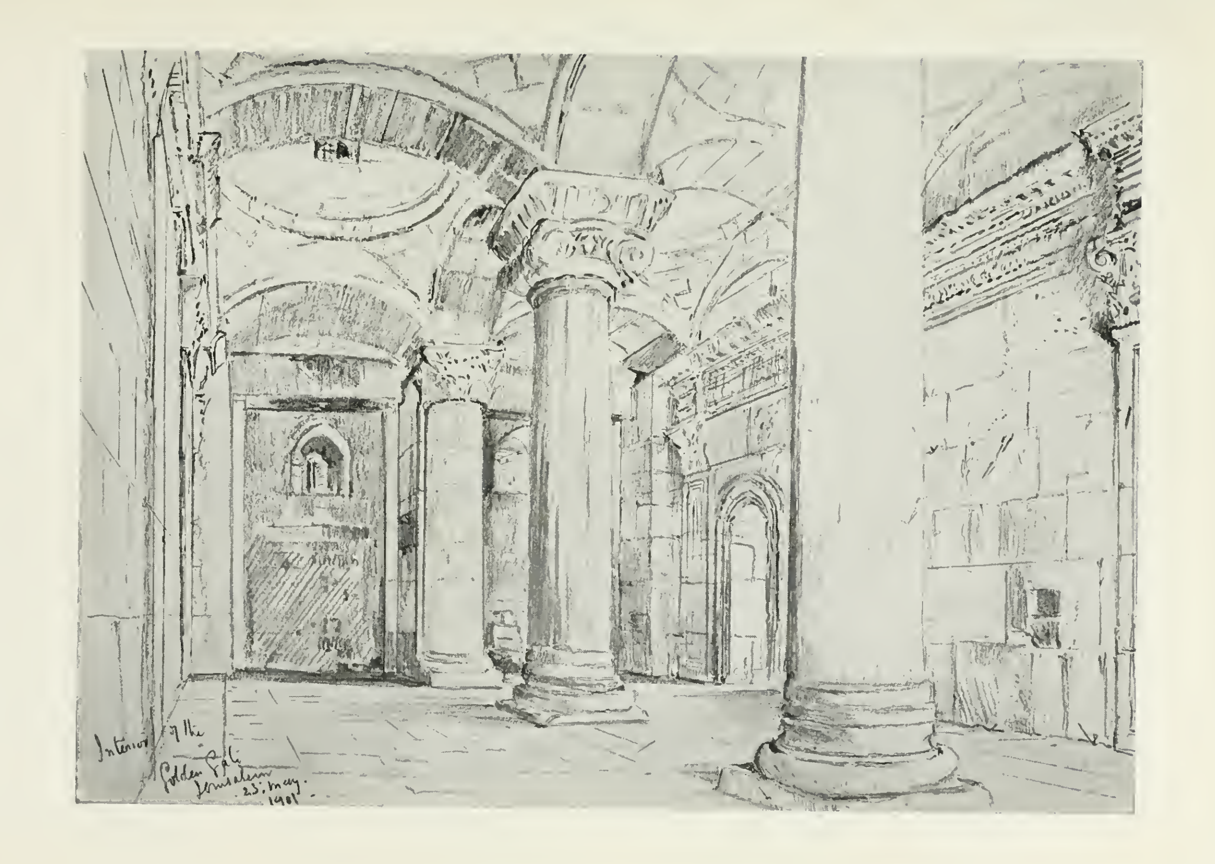
JERUSALEM.—THE INTERIOR OF THE GOLDEN OR BEAUTIFUL GATE

The chamber, which is divided lengthwise by two free standing monolithic columns, and two piers with engaged columns, is about 20 yards long by 12 wide. We are looking towards the eastern entrances, which face the Mount of Olives. It will be seen that the lintels and the side-post to the north are monolithic; the entrances have been walled up, and are pierced by small Turkish windows. The walls to north and south are divided by pilasters supporting a deep and elaborate entablature. The clumsy capitals of the columns are surmounted by deep "dosserets" of the characteristic Byzantine form. Segmental arches (not semicircular as commonly represented) support the domes by which the building is roofed.

The small circular-headed doorway on the right was probably the entrance to the porter's lodge.

The monolithic columns, apparently of cipollino, may have formed part of the Temple of Hadrian, which stood on the site of the Temple of the Jews.

The date of the Golden Gate is probably about the seventh century A.D. Owing to the entablature being carried over the arches of the exterior, as in the buildings at Spalatro, the Golden Gate has been fallaciously regarded as dating from the time of Diocletian.


Interior of the
Golden Gate
Jerusalem
25. May
1901



notably the double-arched "Gate Beautiful," which was thus closed because of a tradition that Messiah would return and enter the city by it. It was from this gate that in olden times the man went forth with the scapegoat that was to bear the sins of the people to the wilderness. The interior (which, however, dates from the seventh century) is a rich and beautiful piece of architecture, with massive monolithic pillars supporting heavy arches, and an elaborately decorative entablature cornicing the walls. It is a dreary little place, with its litter of débris and its flights of bats ; and its dead wall, pierced only with loophole windows, now affords neither entrance for Christ nor exit for sin. What memories crowd the mind of the beholder as he looks upon these gates! Here, seven centuries ago, went out the weeping company of the inhabitants, when Saladin took the city. There, eleven centuries earlier, the Jews set fire to the Roman siege-engine, the flames were blown back upon the fortifications, and the wall fell and made an entrance for the legions. That was near the Jaffa Gate. Here again, by the Damascus Gate, if Gordon's theory be the correct one, the Saviour passed to Calvary ; and there may be stones there on which the cross struck, as Simon the Cyrenian staggered out under its weight.

It is indeed a strange city, a city of grey religion, in which three faiths cherish their most hallowed memories of days far past. But "far past" is written on every memory. That Beautiful Gate has indeed shut out Christ, and shut in all manner of sin unforgiven. The land, as has been already said, seems still inhabited

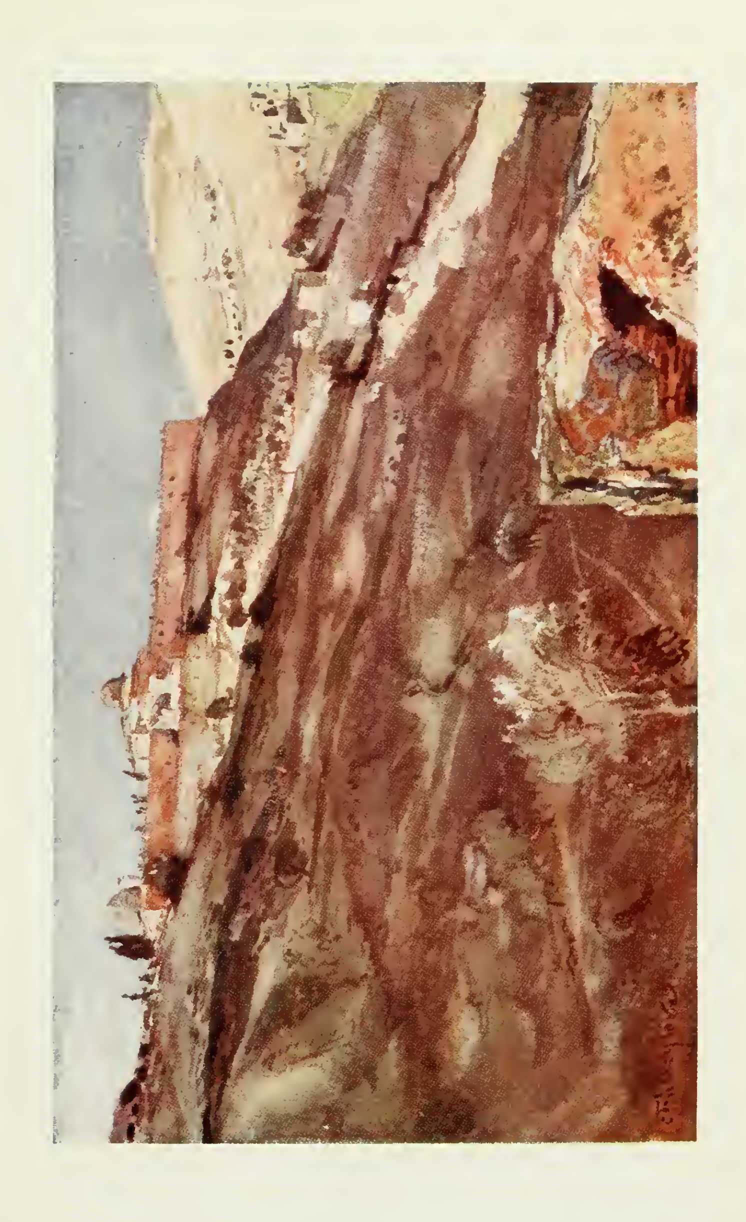
by Christ, but He has forsaken Jerusalem ; it is almost impossible to feel any sense of His presence there. This is a city of grey history, whose age and decrepitude force themselves upon every visitor. It has been well described as having still " the appearance of a gigantic fortress." But it is a weird fortress, with an air of petrified gallantry about it, and an infinite loneliness and desolation. No river flows near to soften the landscape. A fierce sun beats down in summer there upon " a city of stone in a land of iron with a sky of brass." But for the sound of bugles, whose calls seem always to shock one with their savage liveliness, it might be a fossil city. Built for eternity, setting the pattern for that " New Jerusalem " which has been the Utopia of so many devout souls, it seems a sarcasm on the great promise, a city " with a great future behind it." What has this relic to do with a blessed future for mankind—this rugged bareness of stone, this contempt for beauty, this pitiful sordidness of detail ? History and religion seem to mourn together here, and one sees in every remembrance of it those two weeping figures, the most significant of all, for its secular and religious life—Titus, who " gazed upon Jerusalem from Scopus the day before its destruction, and wept for the sake of the beautiful city " ; and Jesus Christ who, when things were ripening for Titus, foresaw the coming of the legions as He looked upon Jerusalem from Olivet, " and when He was come near He beheld the city and wept over it."



JERUSALEM. — SOUTH WALL OF THE TEMPLE AREA, FROM THE VALLEY OF HINNOM, AT SUNSET

The point of view is from Aceldama, the Field of Blood (Acts of the Apostles, i. 19). The ruin in the right-hand lower corner is known as the Building of the Field of Blood : according to tradition it served as a charnel-house for the Crusaders. The valley immediately below is the Valley of Hinnom, that to the right is the Valley of Jehoshaphat or Kidron, with Mount Scopas shewing above, and the north end of the village of Siloam below.

The dome of the Mosque of Omar is seen above the south-west corner of the Temple Area. The other dome, above the centre of the wall, is that of the Mosque of El Aksa. The last rays of sunset redden the South Wall and throw a rich purple shadow over the Valley of Hinnom.





PART II

THE INVADERS



In this part of the book it is not the intention of the author to attempt any sort of history of Syria. We are studying the land as it is to-day, and the only notes that will be given of its former inhabitants are such as may be offered to us by the relics of former times which are still to be seen, either in the life of the people or in buildings. Thus, in each of the chapters, some one or more typical facts will be selected and taken as representative. No catalogue will be offered of such relics, but those selected will be so described and interpreted as to give some general idea of the life and spirit which produced them. The print of a man's hand in ancient plaster, the mark of a mason cut in the stone he hewed, have a singular and solemn power to impress the modern traveller. The impressions given in these chapters are of the same order as those produced by such hand-prints and chisel-marks.

Since the days of the ancient Canaanites Palestine has been often invaded. The composite life of the towns we have already noted. The history of Palestine shows how composite the life of the whole land has become. Its central position among the nations is known to every one. To the south, shut off by but a strip

of desert, are Egypt and Africa ; to the east lie Arabia. Persia, and the farther Asiatic continent ; easily accessible on the north are Asia Minor, Turkey, and Russia ; while ships almost daily arrive which unite it on the west with Europe and America. Yet one day's ride along any of its chief highways will do more to show the traveller what that central position practically means, than all his study of it in books and on maps. For in one day's ride he may meet Kurds, Circassians, Arabs, Syrians, Turks, Cypriotes, Greeks, Russians, Egyptians, Nubians, Austrians, French, Germans, English, and Americans. In a mission school in Damascus were found some little dark-eyed Syrian children speaking English with an unmistakable Australian accent. They had been born and brought up in Queensland.

It is in Hauran that this mixture of races is most forcibly thrust upon one's notice. In the villages south of Damascus, the crowd which gathers round the tents is sure to contain several smiling negroes, some of them branded on the cheeks ; Circassians, with sickle-shaped nose and thin lips, sharp-featured and small-limbed men with an untamable expression on their bitter faces ; Arabs, darker of complexion, and more languid of eye ; and Turkish soldiers, thin and small-pox bitten. There are to be found the Jew, sneering complacently at the inferior world ; the fanatical Moslem, who will break the water-bottle your lips have touched ; the Druse, who objects to coffee and tobacco, and to whom you hesitate to say "Good morning," lest he may have conscientious scruples about that ; and



WATER-CARRIER FILLING SKIN.
JERUSALEM





the cross-bred ruffian, who has no scruples about anything. Everything helps to strengthen the impression. In Damascus it seems always to be Sunday with one or other portion of the population, and a different set of shutters are up each day for nearly half the week. The railway, it might be supposed, must have blended the life of the composite East, but it only serves to emphasise the compositeness. In one of the Hauran stations we had some hours to wait. We spread our rugs in the shadow of the station-house, with a Turkish officer, an Arab soldier, and a long line of camels to watch till lunch was ready. When the time came, the hall of the booking-office was cleared of passengers of a dozen different nationalities, and our lunch was spread on the floor, just in front of the ticket-window! The train came at last, an hour late, drawn by a rather blasé-looking engine. Then began that babel of tongues which shows how nations meet in the East. All the world seemed to have sent its representatives to that train—its wealth to the white-cushioned first-class; its middle-class to the bare boards of the second; its poverty to the cattle-trucks dignified by the name of third,—while behind the carriages came two waggons loaded with grain, their owner perched high on one, and a baby's cradle on the other.

All this phantasmagoria of the present helps one to realise better the extraordinary history of the past. For thousands of years the flow of manifold human life through Syria has been continuous. At the mouth of the Dog River, whose valley has from time immemorial

served as a main passage from the sea to the East for armies, there is, cut in smoothed faces of the solid rock, the most remarkable collection of inscriptions in the world. The Assyrian slab shows still the familiar bearded figure of the monarch with his air of strength untempered by compassion. The Egyptian slab records its invasion in hieroglyphics. The Greek, Roman, and French stones tell their similar tale. Throughout the land the same thing repeats itself. In Hauran we found a fine Egyptian hieroglyphic embedded in the mud-and-rubble interior wall of a private courtyard, an altar of the time of Titus lying exposed on a hill-side, and many Græco-Roman inscriptions built into the walls of houses.[1] The five names which we have selected from so great a number of invaders are those whose mark upon the land has been deepest and most permanent.

[1] For an account of these and others cf. Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement, October 1901.



THE WALL OF THE WAILING-PLACE

This is a portion of the southern half of the West Wall of the Temple Area, and may possibly date from the time of Solomon. It is the spot used by the Jews for many centuries as the place to bewail the lost glories of their ancient Temple, chiefly on Fridays and festival days. All the stones here are of great dimensions (megalithic). Similar stones are found in other portions of the wall, notably at the south-eastern corner, but they occur sporadically, indicating a rebuilding; whereas at the Wailing-place they have remained undisturbed since the date of the original erection.





CHAPTER I

ISRAELITE

Every traveller is impressed by the very meagre remains of a material kind which Israel has left for curious eyes. In a museum at Jerusalem many of these have been gathered—fragments of pottery and glass, coins, and other relics,—but the total number of them is surprisingly small. There are, of course, those huge stones to which reference has been already made, cut in a style which experts used to regard as distinctive enough to enable them to identify it as Jewish work.[1] But inscriptions are extremely rare. Phœnicia and Israel seem to have purposely avoided the habit of Assyrian and Egyptian kings, who wrote upon everything they built. There is, of course, the Moabite stone, whose characters are closely allied to Hebrew writing. But with that exception there is hardly any certain Hebrew inscription extant except one. That is indeed a writing of romantic fame. There is a tunnel known as Hezekiah's Aqueduct, connecting the Fountain of the Virgin with the Pool of Siloam at Jerusalem. Its length is rather more than the third of a mile ; its

[1] See, however, Professor G. A. Smith's *Jerusalem*, vol. i. pp. 189, 190.

height varies from five or six feet to one foot four inches. Its course bends in a wide sweep which adds greatly to the distance, and is said to have been taken in order to avoid tombs. There are a number of *culs de sac*, where the workmen had evidently lost their way. The flow of water is intermittent, so that Sir Charles Warren and his friends took their lives in their hands when they first explored it. Their mouths were often under water, "and a breath of air could only be obtained by twisting their faces up. To keep a light burning, to take measurements, and make observations under these circumstances was a work of no little difficulty ; and yet, after crawling through mud and water for four hours, the honour of finding the inscription was reserved for a naked urchin of the town, who, some years after, announced that he had seen writing on the wall, whereupon Professor Sayce, and Herr Schick, and Dr Guthe plunge naked into the muddy tunnel with acid solutions, and blotting-paper, and everything necessary to make squeezes, and emerge shivering and triumphant with the most interesting Hebrew inscription that has ever been found in Palestine."[1] The inscription describes the meeting of the two parties of miners, who, like the engineers of modern tunnels, began to bore simultaneously at opposite ends.

Failing any wealth of such material remains, we must seek for Israel in the human life of the land. Jews are there in abundance, gathered, for the most part, within their four holy cities of Jerusalem, Tiberias,

[1] *Haifa*, Laurence Oliphant, pp. 317, 318.

Hebron, and Safed. In Hebron they are a persecuted minority ; in Safed they form about half the population ; in Jerusalem, where there are more than seventy synagogues, it was estimated in 1898 that out of the 60,000 inhabitants 41,000 were Jews, nearly six times the number of the Mohammedans ; while in Tiberias also they form about two-thirds of the population. Besides the Jews resident in these cities there are others both in the older colonies and in the new settlements of the Zionist movement, which have been created by the generosity of Jewish millionaires. Reports differ as to the success of these interesting experiments, and the knowledge of them which can be obtained from a passing visit is a quite inadequate ground for forming any judgment. Mr. Zangwill eloquently pleads for the restoration of the land to its ancient people ; Colonel Conder assures us that the Jew is incapable of becoming a thoroughly successful agriculturist, though as a shopkeeper, a money-changer, or, in some cases, as a craftsman, he prospers in his native land. Certain it is that Jews are gathering to it from Russia, Poland, Germany, Spain, Arabia, and many other countries, with what ultimate result the future alone can shew.

It would be unfair and misleading to take the present Jewish population of Syria as the representative of ancient Israel. It still perpetuates, indeed, the sects of Pharisees and Sadducees, and it still holds aloof from the surrounding population with that independence and tenacity which has marked Israel from of old. Crucified

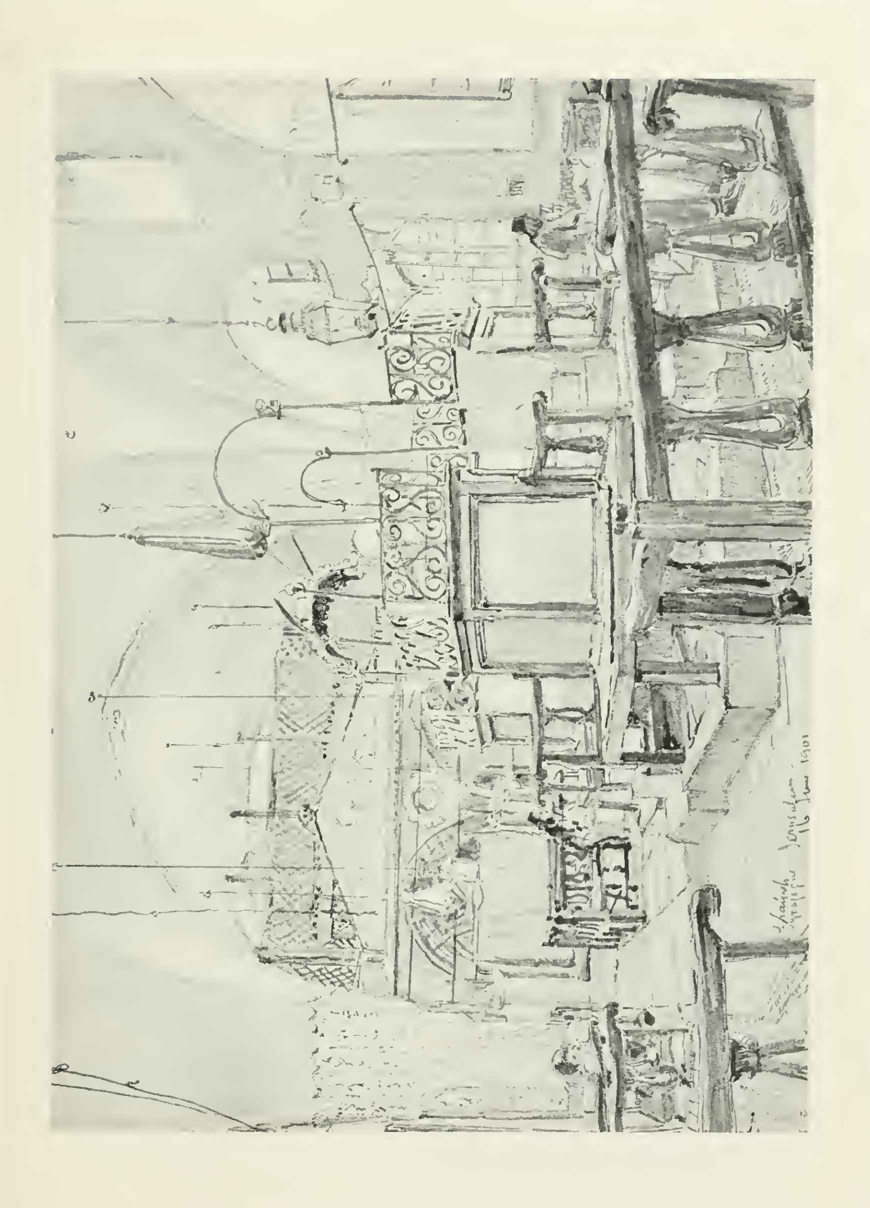
by Romans, butchered and tortured by Crusaders, oppressed and driven forth by Moslems, this marvellous people lives yet and will live on. In Europe the lot of the Jew has been and still is a bitter one. In Syria to-day the lowest and most insulting term of abuse among the Fellahin is to call each other Jews. Yet the spirit of the people is not broken by oppression, as is the spirit of the Fellahin. The Jew takes what comes and says little; but he believes in himself, his past and his future, with a faith indomitable as it is daring. Still it must be confessed that the Jew of Palestine is generally repulsive. Mark Twain's description of them as he saw them at Tiberias is hardly overdrawn — "long-nosed, lanky, dyspeptic-looking ghouls with the indescribable hats on, and a long curl dangling down in front of each ear." The hats are circular black felt plates, giving to their wearers a peculiar air of conscious rectitude and semi-clerical superiority; the curls are grown for the convenience of the archangel in the resurrection! The younger men and lads of Tiberias impress one as the most unpleasant-looking of all the inhabitants of the land. They are so neurotic and effeminate, and at the same time so monstrously supercilious. The Jewish quarters are famous for their excessive dirt. In the visitors' book of the hotel at Tiberias, Captain MacGregor wrote "that the *Rob Roy* and myself had stopped there two nights, and that the canoe was not devoured." This is not encouraging, and in part it is the result of mistaken methods. Many of these Jews are subsidised, and a



SPANISH SYNAGOGUE IN JERUSALEM.—INTERIOR

The raised platform in the centre, having four ascents, is the pulpit from which the books of the Law are read. The curtained recess at the end of the building contains the cupboard for the sacred rolls.

The latticed gallery above is reserved for the women of the congregation.





subsidised religion is inevitably degrading. A man who receives an income for no other service to his kind than that he is a Jew is not likely to do credit to his ancestors.

In the Samaritans we have better representatives of the ancient days. No people in the land have a more pathetic quaintness about them than these few survivors of antiquity who are still met with in the streets of Nablus. They preserve the old type of features, for their blood has been unmixed for more than 2000 years. But they are fast dying out, and only a remnant of less than 200 individuals is now alive. Difficult of access, reserved, mysterious, they are the ghosts of ancient Israel, who seem to haunt rather than to enjoy their former heritage.

In the manners and customs of Syria a still more interesting memorial of Israel is found. Many of these were not peculiar to Israel, nor was she the first to cherish them. They are the forms of the general Semitic stock, of which she was but one people. But the words and ways of Israel are the only form of Semitic life with which the world is familiar, and every student of the Bible finds in these the greatest source both of devout and of scientific interest. In the towns and in Jerusalem there is still much to remind one of the life so matchlessly delineated in Scripture. Lean and mangy dogs still sniff around Lazarus at the very door of Dives. The windows of houses generally face the interior courts, and the outer walls are blank, so that every door opened after nightfall contrasts the vivid light of the interior with the "outer darkness"

of the street. Still more in the country, among the Fellahin and the wandering Arabs, does one seem to live in Bible times. The gipsy-like Bedawin west of Jordan are certainly degraded by change of nomadic habits and by contact with the villagers ; yet there is enough of their desert heredity in them to interpret many of the patriarchal stories. The Arab sitting at noon-day in the shaded edge of his tent, or walking at eventide in the fields where it is pitched, is the true son of Abraham and Isaac. When you know him better you will not improbably recognise Jacob also. Except for tobacco, gunpowder, and coffee, he lives much as Israel lived in those days of wandering to which her writings love to trace back her origin. Even these modern innovations hardly break the continuity. The Arab smokes with such enthusiasm that it is difficult to imagine his fathers without their chibouk ; and his brass-bound gun might be the heirloom of countless generations. Of the Fellah and his descent, and his conservatism of the past, we have already written.

So it comes to pass that he who journeys intelligently through Palestine reads the history of Israel ever afterwards with a quite new interest. The Bible is incomparably the best guide-book to Syria ; and you seem to journey through its chapters as you move from place to place. Here is the fig tree planted in the vineyard ; there, the tower guarding the wine-press. Unmuzzled oxen are trampling the corn on the threshing-floor, from whence the wind drives the chaff in a glistening cloud. Women are still coming

from the city to draw water, and grinding in couples at the mill. We saw the prodigal son, drinking and singing at Beyrout; and the owner of the waggon-loads of corn we noted in Hauran had kept them from the last year on the chance of a drought, which would raise their prices in the market—he was the rich man of the prophets who was grinding the faces of the poor. Under the walls of Jezreel a curious coincidence brought back vividly to mind the tragic fate of Jezebel. It was there that we first saw people with painted eyes and faces; and there a horse lay dead with a pack of dogs at work upon the body. Next morning, as we parted, nothing was left but the skeleton and the hoofs. The people whom you meet are talking in Bible language. When they repeat the familiar words of Scripture they are not quoting texts, but transacting business in their ordinary way. We were told of a shepherd near Hebron who, when asked why the sheepfolds there had no doors, answered quite simply, "I am the door." He meant that at night, when the sheep were gathered within the circular stone wall of the enclosure, he lay down in its open entrance to sleep, so that no sheep might stray from its shelter without wakening him, and no ravenous beast might enter but across his body. In the north, an American was endeavouring to persuade a stalwart Syrian lad to try his fortunes in Chicago. The boy evidently felt the temptation, but he turned smilingly towards the middle-aged man at his side, and, pointing to him, answered, "Suffer me first to bury my father."

But of all our experiences there was one which recalled the ancient life most vividly, and on that account it may be related here. We had camped over night near the village of Tell-es-Shihab in Hauran. In the morning we mounted our horses amid a crowd of villagers, and started for the village. The men protested loudly, and when we told them we were going only to search for inscriptions, they assured us that there were none. In spite of their opposition we rode on, followed by a tumultuous chorus. A chance remark led finally to an invitation from the headman of the village to his *menzil*, or reception hall. It was the mention of the name of Dr. Torrance, of the Tiberias Medical Mission, who, on one of his journeys, had cured this sheikh of an illness. At the door our host met us, and most courteously invited us to enter, bowing and touching our palms with his. The hall was dark, with the great stone arch characteristic of Hauran architecture spanning its centre. Smoke had coloured the arch and the rafters a rich dark brown, from whose shadow swallows flitted continually out into the sunshine and back again. We were seated on mats, spread with little squares of rich carpet round three sides of a hollow place in the floor, where a fire of charcoal burned, surrounded by parrot-beaked coffee-pots. This was the hearth of hospitality, whose fire is never suffered to go out ; near it stood the great stone mortar, in which a black slave was crushing coffee-beans. The coffee, deliciously flavoured with some cunning herb or other, was passed round. But the conversation which followed was the memorable part of

that entertainment. In the shadow at the back the young men who had been admitted sat in silence. The old men, elders of the village community, sat in a row on stone benches right and left of the door. The sheikh made many apologies for not having called upon us at the tents—he had thought we were merchantmen going to buy silk at Damascus. Then followed endless over-valuation of each other, and flattery concerning our respective parents and relations. "How long would we stay under his roof? surely at least till to-morrow or next day? No, one of us had to catch a steamer at Beyrout? But any steamer would wait for so great a general," etc. Until finally our leader came to the delicate subject of inscriptions, and was made free of the town, and immediately guided to the Egyptian slab mentioned on p. 94. It was a perfect specimen of intercourse with Arabs, and it dazed us with its ancient spell. There is no possibility of hurry. You must despatch your business by way of a discussion of things in general. Compliments were as rife and as conventional as those of Abraham and the children of Heth at Kirjath - Arba, and they were received and given without any pretence of taking them seriously. The elders sat silently leaning upon their staves, except now and then, when one of them would slowly rise and expatiate upon something the sheikh had said—perhaps about camels or the grain crop—beginning his interruption almost literally in the words of Job's friends :—
"Hearken to me, I also will shew mine opinion. I will answer also on my part, I also will shew mine opinion.

For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me." Altogether it was a scene of the unadulterated East—just such a scene as might have been witnessed any time these three thousand years.

The great memorial of Israel is her religion. To her it was given to know the Eternal God and to pass on that knowledge to all the nations of the world. Among the many impressions given by a journey through Palestine, none is so important and none so strong as this, that the land was eminently suited for that one purpose and for that alone. In illustration of this fact, let us recall a short portion of Israel's history—the period from Solomon to Ahab—and consider it in the light of facts which the land itself thrusts upon the traveller. It was the early days of the kingdom, a time at which "the changeless East" had not yet become changeless. Oriental vitality seems to exhaust itself early, and a frozen conventionality succeeds to it, in virtue of which its ancient life may still be seen to-day. But before that, in the beginning of national life, there is a wonderful youthfulness, an exuberant and quick acceptance and change of ideals, which it would be hard to match even in Western history. It is to that period that we now turn.

Israel at the close of David's reign was a nation of one idea. Her true greatness, her interest, and her failure all gather round that centre. It is not in herself that her importance lies, but in this great thing which she has in charge — the revelation of

Jehovah. Her history from first to last was essentially the development of that idea, for it grew purer and clearer from generation to generation. Its power as an active force was miraculous. During many ages of the history, the mass of the nation neither understood nor cherished the religious trust that had been committed to them. It was hidden in the soul of some solitary prophet, or some faithful religious remnant, while kings and people went after other ambitions. But its secret force always reasserted itself, undoing all that kings and people had done, while they opposed or ignored it.

In studying this phenomenon, the land and its conditions of life assume a new significance and interest. The period which we have selected for this brief survey offers us a conveniently small stage on which to see the drama. It is a simple and elementary time, an age of experiments and the beginnings of things. It shews us kings of orginality and force of character, conscious that the future of the nation is in their hands. The obvious and ordinary ideals for kingdoms present themselves in succession to the nation in the policies of her kings, and there is a singular parallel between these and the typical temptations which presented themselves to Jesus at the outset of His public history. For the individual, these are bread, fame, and power; for the nation the corresponding temptations are commercial prosperity, military conquest, and political empire, though to the nation they come in the reverse order. We find the kings one after another enthusiastically seeking to establish the nation on such ideals, and the

nation backing them. On each occasion we find the neglected spiritual ideal of Israel throwing off the king and all his works, and beating the nation back upon its real vocation. It is this persistent and repeated overthrow of secular ideals, almost as much as the truths successively revealed, that makes the purpose and the working of a Living God in Israel so obvious a fact of history. And in all these pathetic experiments of kings with a throne whose only chance lay not in secular but in religious greatness, one fact is evident. Palestine, the land chosen for Israel by her God, was a land where secular greatness was impossible; it was a land suited only to be the home of Revelation, the candlestick from whence the world might see a great light.

Solomon, the commanding figure for his times and the darling of future Israelites, seems, as Stanley expresses it, to have been a strange union of genius and crime. His father bequeathed to him one of those unique opportunities, in which a man may do practically what he chooses with a nation. Nominally, and in the early days sincerely, he realised the religious meaning of the national life. His temple was the wonder of the world, and his chosen rôle was that of "most religious sovereign." But his real ambition was prompted by the secular glories of the great empires of the East. Foster Kent summarises it in his apposite phrase, "Solomon's Policy of Orientalism." His "glory" was the glory of the Arabian Nights. Like Louis XV. of France—to whose reign Solomon's bears a most significant resemblance—he glorified the capital to the

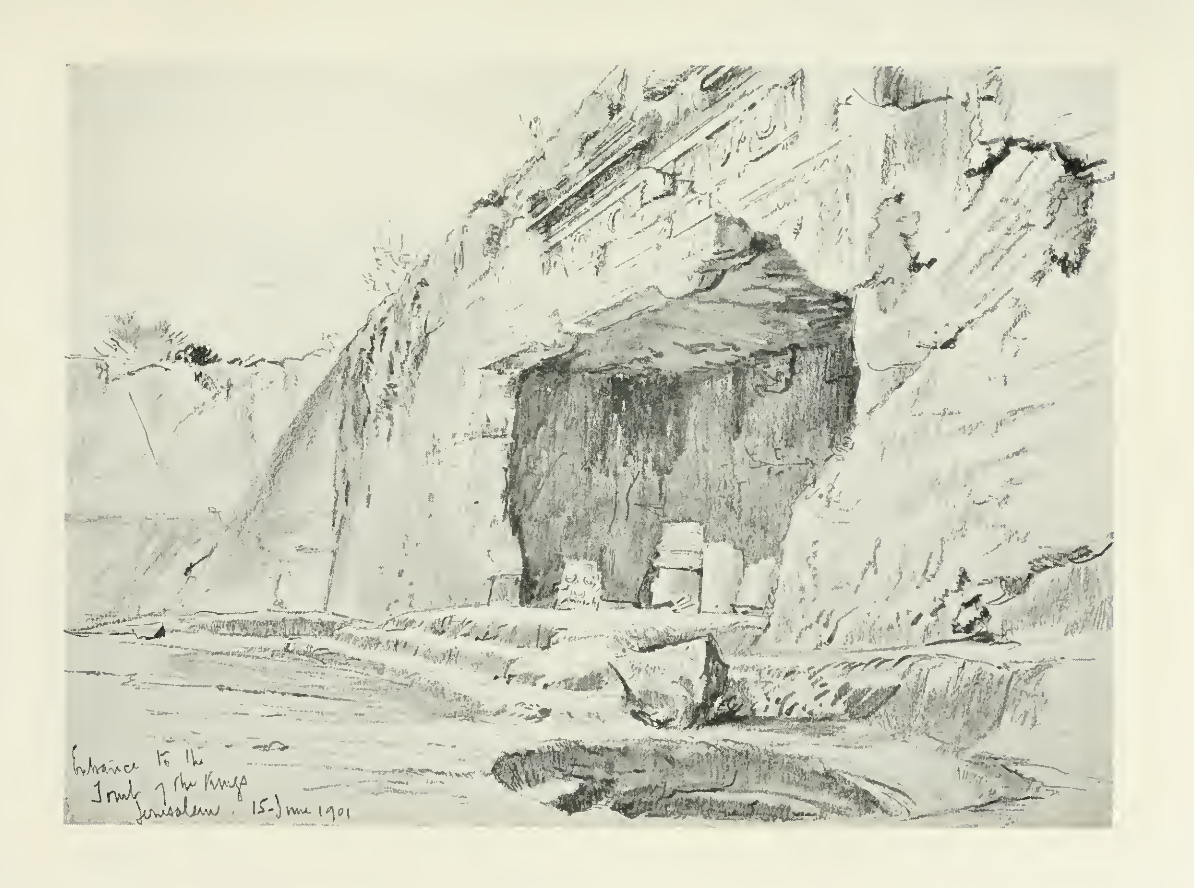


THE SO-CALLED TOMBS OF THE KINGS

This is the vestibule leading to a series of rock-cut sepulchral chambers, which appear to have been made for the members of a royal family of Adiabene in Syria who were converts to Judaism.

The two columns which formerly divided the entrance have been broken up. The entrance is framed with an enriched border of fruit and flowers, and is surmounted by a rock-cut entablature consisting of a frieze and cornice of Roman-Doric character.

The circular opening in the foreground is a shallow rock-cut cistern for catching rain-water.


Entrance to the
Tomb of the Kings
Jerusalem. 15 June 1901



extent of attracting everything to it. To do this he drained the resources of the country by taxation and forced labour, crowded Jerusalem with foreigners, established an enormous harem, and tolerated heathen sacrifices. Louis XV., when some one remonstrated with him on the state of feeling which he had aroused by draining France to glorify Paris, replied, "It will last my time." A similar thought must surely have come at times to the "wise" King of Israel, as the blundering and incompetent character of his son disclosed itself. The East will stand a wonderful amount of tyranny if there is sufficient strength behind it; without that a "policy of Orientalism" is the most dangerous policy in the world. The land was never made to be a setting for the jewel of a single city whose flashing splendour might dazzle the world. It was fitted only to be the home of men who worked hard and believed in God. The splendour of Solomon accordingly ended with his funeral.

If Solomon neglected the theocracy, his successors in the northern kingdom disowned it. Jeroboam, a man (it is said) of humble origin, had been a villager in the "wretched clay fields" of the Jordan valley. Finding his way to Jerusalem, his intelligence and enterprise had gained him a position at the head of the building operations there. Brought thus into close contact both with the overtaxed provincials and with the forced labourers, he eventually assumed the rôle of radical politician and demagogue. The northern tribes revolted from Solomon's successor, and proclaimed Jero-

boam king of the north. He cared little for religion; and, regarding it simply as an element in politics, set up his shrines at Bethel and at Dan to keep his subjects from going to Jerusalem. Politics seems to have been his ideal—the creation of a state on democratic principles in contrast with the late "Orientalism." He was the most modern of Israel's kings. But his attempt failed as signally as the former one. The tribes were incoherent, for the Semite does not know the meaning of national unity on the large scale, and splits into groups of small self-governing communities. The Jordan valley and the Plain of Esdraelon cut up the land into sections, and further militated against a democratic union; and the various geographical characters of these sections made them centres of different interests, agricultural, commercial, and pastoral. In a territory which was naturally so difficult to unite, owing to physical as well as racial causes, the only bond of union from which anything could be hoped was religion. For their God's sake they might become one nation, but not for the sake of politics. And so the second attempt at secular greatness perished and King Jeroboam went to his grave a broken-hearted adventurer.

In the reign of Baasha we are brought in contact with a third attempt at secular greatness for Israel—the military ideal. It is true that we know next to nothing about the personality of Baasha, and that all Israel's kings about this time had to be warriors more or less. Yet Baasha may fairly stand for a representative

of that dream of militarism which was so powerful a factor in Israel's history, and which in times like his became the rival of her higher calling. He must have been a conspicuous figure of some sort, for no mere commonplace nonentity could have held the throne then for four-and-twenty years, as he did. And it is to be remembered that all we know about him is the story of his fighting, which seems to have been on a large and ambitious scale. It was his policy which led to the interference of the Syrian power of Damascus in the history of Israel, the most critical fact in all her military history. Jeroboam, in gaining political ascendency, had been compelled to put himself at the head of the army, and now each king was held in its grip as in a vice. Success was the one indispensable quality ; no king could dare to fail. Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, failed in a siege, and his chance was over. Baasha succeeded and had a career. Audacity is perhaps the word which best expresses the character of such a king.

He found Israel in the centre of a double circle. The outer circle consisted of the natural barriers of mountain, desert, and sea, beyond which lay great military empires and lands unexplored. Within this outer circle lay an inner ring of hostile tribes — Phœnician, Syrian, Moabite, Edomite, Arabian, and Philistine. Her neighbourhood with these tribes forced upon Israel the immediate necessity for fighting, whilst the outer circle gave her a special opportunity for realising that religious seclusion was the providential

meaning of her situation, and that revelation and not empire was her work.

Many difficulties lay in the way of Israel's military ambition, and many criticisms have been passed upon her tactics. Of these we shall consider only one, for which our study of the land has already prepared us. Lying open as she did, with so many passes giving entrance to her central territory, the most important and at the same time the most trying task she had to face was that of securely guarding the mouths of these passes. Looking at the matter from a purely strategic point of view, and confining our attention to the eastern part of the country, it is obvious that a line of strong forts at the mouths of passes along the Jordan valley was of first importance to secure her from invasion. Six or ten such forts, strongly constructed and garrisoned, would have sufficed to protect the interior by an impregnable line of fortifications running from Jericho to the Sea of Galilee. Had Solomon spent upon such fortresses some of the wealth he lavished upon his palaces, the whole future of the land might have been changed. But the kings of Israel, with one or two exceptions, seem to have been singularly wanting in the geographical instinct of war, and they manifested a positive genius for fortifying the wrong places. Instead of strengthening the valley-mouths, they built a few fortresses on the heights east of the Jordan, mere outposts or blockhouses, far beyond the main line of march of the great invaders; and they ran a series of fortifications up the central highlands of the



PORTION OF THE CITADEL OF JERUSALEM

The wall in front is a portion of the north wall of the Citadel. The tower to the left is part of the group known as the Towers of David. The western wall of the Citadel, which also forms part of the western walls of the city, is seen to the right. The somewhat shapeless mass of masonry in the centre may be the substructures of Herod's palace. The minaret belongs to the Mosque of the garrison. The Judean hills bound the horizon.





western country. These heights were indeed sufficiently strongly fortified, but when an enemy had reached so far as to their walls, the land was already conquered, and sieges were all that remained. It seems almost incredible, when one is on the spot, that this policy was so uncompromisingly adopted as it evidently was. The gorge of Michmash lay open, the fortified places being Ramah and Bethel, more than fifteen miles from the door of the pass. So the gates of other valleys running down to Jordan from the west were left undefended, while Shechem sat strong but far away, a dozen miles inland. Most strange of all is Bethshan, which has already been described, a post held century after century by the Canaanites, though it lay in the very heart of the widest entrance of all.

This is but one sample of the disabilities under which Israel's military enterprise laboured. No doubt there was natural incapacity to reckon with, but there was the direct interference of religion as well. At all points her religious restrictions hampered and checked her military dreams. She was forbidden to number her people, to use the horse or the chariot in war, or to cut down fruit-trees when besieging towns. A man's betrothal exempted him from service ; battles had to wait for sacrificial rites, and the delay of a prophet disarranged a whole campaign. The incitements of booty and revenge, which count for so much in the warfare of half-civilised peoples, were held in check by the frequent interposition of the ban upon all the spoils of victory and the laws against cruelty to

captured foes. It was by express religious command that Jericho remained in ruins, and that Saul abandoned his stronghold in Michmash for the open field. And besides all this, over the whole story of Israel's wars lay the spell of the supernatural. Jehovah's frequent interference with her warfare drew the minds of the fighters away from tactics to their faith in the will of God. Altogether, religion paralysed her fighting arm in every attempt at empire ; it permitted war only in so far as that might serve the one end of clearing and keeping clear a space for the nation to live and learn.

One more experiment remained for Israel's kings, the attempt at commercial greatness. Palestine, from very early days, was in close contact with a great land-trade and a still greater sea-trade. The land-trade was carried on by the Arameans, whose centre at this period was Damascus, and who were the messengers and carriers of the Eastern world. They made and occupied the great caravan routes, where their long strings of camels came and went with all manner of wealthy merchandise. The Phœnicians managed the sea-trade not only of Palestine but of the world. Lebanon was at hand for shipbuilding, and Tyre and Sidon provided harbours. Devoting all their energies to their mercantile marine enterprise, they drew off from their neighbours of the south and inland country. Enemies might come and go about them. Their business was not to fight battles but to sail the sea. They secured peace by gifts or by tribute. They could well afford these, and they did not feel the shame. Their ideal was a world-wide com-

merce, matching the world-wide empire of other nations, and they realised it.

In all this there was much that appealed strongly to the Hebrew cast of mind, and the glory of Solomon had greatly fostered it. Jerusalem in his time had been filled with foreign merchandise, and foreign craftsmen had taught many things to Israel. New work in metal, wood, stone, and cloth had created new interests; and the alliances with distant powers had opened up a foreign market for exports also, so that a new class of middlemen was already springing up in Israel, commission agents between producers and consumers.

But it seems to have been Omri who deliberately adopted the policy of commercial greatness for Israel. He was indeed first of all a fighting man, but his warfare was not his distinguishing achievement. After a defeat, he was forced to open bazaars in Samaria, with free trade for Aramean produce. That concession may not have been so unwillingly granted after all; for his heart was set on a Phœnician alliance, and the secret of that alliance was undoubtedly commercial. He married his son Ahab to Jezebel, daughter of the King of Tyre; and he changed his capital from Tirzah to Samaria, which lay within three days' journey from the Tyrian capital. So he turned the whole current of the national interest towards the greatest centre of commercial enterprise in the world.

There was much to favour the new project. Memories and tales of the days of Solomon still haunted Hebrew imagination, and while the bitter-

ness of those days had passed away, the colour and the romance of them lingered. One can realise how the monotonous and dull life of the rustics must have been enlivened by the arrival of strange plants and animals, of brilliant metals, ivory, and ebony, and by the marvels of foreign manufacture which Phœnician ships and Aramean camels brought from far. One recalls the time in our own country, when the curious wealth of the West Indies and America set our seaport towns staring in the days of Queen Elizabeth. But besides all this, there was a very real and immediate opening for trade in the corn-fields of the north country. Phœnicia had practically no agriculture, and Israel, if in firm alliance with Phœnicia, might have risen to enormous importance as the market for her food-supply. Movers calculates that at one time the corn exports from Israel to Sidon were worth £1,900,000 sterling per annum. Were Omri able firmly to establish his kingdom on a commercial basis of which this food-supply would form the staple, he might push trade of all kinds and make Israel great among the commercial nations of the world.

Many things rendered the dream a vain one. The great fields of commerce were already occupied, and all that Israel could ever hope to be commercially was a nation of middlemen. Even for that the time had not yet come. The instinct which has made the Jews of later centuries proverbial as financiers was as yet all immature and unpractised. Israel's coast was harbourless and her instincts those of landsmen, besides which



TWO WOMEN GRINDING AT A HAND MILL





she had hardly any point of access to the sea at all, the maritime coast being inhabited by her enemies. Once more, the fighting blood that was in her, and that had already stirred some kings to the dream of militarism, would never suffer her contentedly to bow her neck before her enemies as the Phœnicians did for the sake of gain.

But here, as in the former secular ideals, the decisive element in the case against commercialism was religion. Omri's ideal was wholly irreligious. His daughter-in-law was a fanatical enthusiast for Baal-worship, but he was a practical man, of a consistently worldly type, whose religion was Commercial Prosperity. Once again the spiritual was strong enough to overthrow the material ideal. The sacred laws of Israel put a check upon her commercial enterprise. Besides the ban which regulated spoil, there were laws concerning interest and money, intermarriage with foreigners, and many other matters directly affecting trade. The religious sects of Rechabites and Nazarites were a standing protest against all foreign traffic. The spirit of the prophets poured contempt upon the gay foreign imports, and definitely opposed the foreign trade as a thing which would associate the people with idol-worship, which would lead to the forsaking of the hard struggle with the soil for the easier riches of the market, and which, by creating the taste for luxury, would soften and debauch the race.

For the time being conscience overcame temptation. In Ahab all the four ideals seemed to blend—a weak

man, without a new policy of his own, who would now be Oriental monarch, now people's friend, now soldier, and now merchant-king. Against him rose the conscience of Israel in the person of Elijah, with what result all the world knows. And the lesson of it all is this, that the story and the land interpreting each other proclaim Israel a peculiar people, set in a peculiar place for a peculiar purpose. For them, as Renan says, "to act like men"—*i.e.* like all the rest of the world—was a sort of degradation. All other experiments in greatness failed; their greatness lay solely in the knowledge of the Lord.

CHAPTER II

ROMAN

NOTHING strikes one more than the contrast in Palestine between the vanishing of Hebrew buildings and the permanence of Roman ones. You have come here to a land which you know to have been for many years under Roman government, but which still to your imagination is Oriental, with here and there a Roman touch. You find, among the very ancient buildings, hardly a remaining trace of anything that is not Roman ; and of Roman work you find an amount which probably astonishes you. Before you have long left Jaffa, some part or other of one of the old Roman roads making for Jerusalem will be seen. Not long afterwards Bether comes in sight—that terrible little valley where the blood ran so deep when the siege ended and the Jews' last hope was broken. So you move on from point to point of Roman story until, as you climb the steep ascent from the Jordan valley to Gadara, you realise that it was when encamped just here that Vespasian heard the news of Nero's death and was proclaimed emperor by his legion.

The Roman work in Palestine seems to exaggerate its peculiar characteristics, so that here one notices these more distinctly than in any other land. A Roman tower in Switzerland, a Roman road in Scotland—certainly they are Roman, but they are not removed from all things Swiss or Scotch by so vast an interval as that which divides Roman from native work in Palestine. It is indeed an invasion of arms, this Roman life—an intrusion of what is, first and last, alien to the spirit of the place. The traveller to-day, to whom the very dust of this land is dear, inevitably feels about the Roman relics an air of obtrusive and uncomprehending indifference. They "cared for none of these things," or, if they did care a little now and then and try to understand, they did it clumsily and unnaturally. Rome's policy was that of wide toleration, but her spirit was absolutely unaccommodating. She might allow her provinces to govern themselves and to worship pretty much as they chose, but she herself, in her officials and their works, stood aloof from them and was Rome still. This is to be seen in Palestine in all its good and in all its bad aspects. In those solidly-constructed bridges and mighty aqueducts and imperishable causeways there is the very embodiment of the Roman *virtus* and *gravitas*, that output of manhood, which never trifled nor spared itself, that solemn, business-like reality which is so full of purpose. In this hard *reality* of Rome there is not only purpose but pitilessness of force to accomplish what is planned. Every Roman road you chance upon seems to be feeling its way with an unerring instinct

towards Jerusalem or some other goal, and you know that it will arrive. Just as impressive, on the other hand, is the sense of Rome's limitations. Her works disclose her seeing a certain length, and you know beyond all doubt that she will get there. But there are very obvious and very clearly defined limits to the length she ever sees or will go. The work of Greece is far beyond the furthest reach of Roman work—the glad spring, the grace of conscious strength that is beautiful as well as strong, the restfulness withal of perfect harmony that is thinking of more than merely utilitarian values ; of these Rome knows not the secret. Beside the flight of Greek art she is pedestrian ; to the Greek artist she plays at best but the part of Roman artisan. Forceful, massive, successful up to its highest desire, the Roman work is finished and perfect. And it has attained finish and perfection on a lower level than that of any nation that ever yet dreamed dreams or "looked beyond the world for truth and beauty."

Not that there are no other traces of Rome in Syria beyond the stones of Roman ruins. In many place-names Latin is discernible, and the country is full of inscriptions of all sorts. A still more permanent mark was left by that invasion of Roman spirit which, for a time, claimed Israel for Rome. Rome came to Syria next in succession to the invasion of Alexander the Great. After his death the Macedonian power remained in the East, and the seductive spirit of Greek humanism became the rival of the old Puritan Hebraism of the nation. It was this that led to the Wars of the

Maccabees, who fought for the sterner against the more genial spirit. As in the days of English Cromwell, the Puritan was invincible while he remained true to his faith—that singularly effective blend of patriotism with religious belief which has made itself felt in so many national histories. The triumph of Hebraism lasted for about a century, and then came Pompey in 63 B.C. to Jerusalem. Hellenism regained its ascendency and the Greek cities of Palestine their freedom. About a quarter of a century later the figure of Herod the Great appears as a critical factor in the history of Palestine. An Idumean and a Sadducee, he had neither patriotism nor religion to check his ambition. The path of glory and of easy advancement, then, was by way of Rome, and there was much in Herod that found Rome congenial. As a young man he had made his name by clearing out a notorious band of robbers from the valley which led down the great road from the Mediterranean to the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum. This "Vale of Doves" is flanked by precipices pierced with many caves, in which the robbers lived. Josephus tells us how Herod fell upon the device of letting down cages with the bravest of his soldiers. These men, lowered by ropes from the edge of the cliff, sprang upon the robbers in their cave's mouth, and when they retreated within, smoked them out with fires like vermin. The man who contrived and carried out that design was not unworthy of the title "Great" from the Roman point of view. He became the centre and the champion of the new Hellenism, which was really the worship of

Rome, touched as Rome was with the Greek culture she had conquered and envied and sought in vain to acquire. Rome was clumsily Greek at this time, and Herod was clumsily Roman. Certainly he would have been a Roman if he could. He was prepared to go any length to serve his end. At the Banias springs of Jordan he built a temple to Augustus. Samaria and Cæsarea, his Roman cities, must have cost him a fabulous sum to build.

Of the actual architectural remains of Rome in Palestine, the smallest are perhaps the most impressive. Here and there, from south to north, you come upon tesseræ, the remains of inlaid mosaic floors of the ancient houses. Sometimes it is single little cubes that turn up among the gravel of the sea-shore or shine from the newly-ploughed furrow. At other times broken fragments of a hand-breadth's size may be found, with enough variety of colour to suggest the beginning of a pattern. But here and there you may find whole floors of elaborately designed mosaic, with concentric circles of various colour and size, with large-scale pictures, or, as in one case at least, with an ancient map—one of the most ancient in the world. Tesseræ become familiar after a time, but one's first acquaintance with them is exciting enough. I do not think my friend or I either will forget that day at Bethel, where we had camped in the bottom of an ancient reservoir, and remembered the opening chapter of Volney's *Ruins of Empires.* We were addressed by a native who evidently had some dark secret to impart. The nearest interpretation of the

words that we could arrive at was "Moses," but we were prepared to distrust a man who offered to introduce us to the Lawgiver. Suddenly it struck us; it was *mosaic* he was trying to say. He pointed to the ground near some ruins of pillars. Water was brought and poured on the hard earth, and in this mud, with knife-blades and hands, we dug on, until at last my fingers found the rectangular sharp edge of pavement *in situ*. The thrill of that little incident gave us some sort of imagination of what the excitement of real exploring must be. But it was not long till we became so accustomed to tesseræ that they woke no enthusiasm in us. On many a spot of Palestine you ride over ground whose stones are capitals of carved pillars, and whose layers of caked earth disclose fragments of ancient mosaic floors.

The Roman roads are still frequently met with in Palestine, and these, perhaps more than any other of their works, help the imagination to realise the old life in its magnificence of power. Whether the causeway lies bare to the weather across a mountain, or whether it cuts its track along the sheer cliff of a gorge, there is the same uncompromising purpose and capacity in it—the stride of the road, that seems to be aware of whither it is going and the reason for its going there. In the cities of the Decapolis and others there is generally one straight line of Roman causeway—the "Street called Straight," which is by no means peculiar to Damascus. It was a Roman hobby, this of straightness, and one of the most characteristic of Roman hobbies. The roads went, so far as that was possible,

up hill and down dale in a direct line from place to place ; and in the cities at least one columned street did the same. The milestones which may still be found occasionally seem to heighten the human interest, though that is considerably damped when we realise that none of these roads date from the early Roman days in Syria. The paths our Saviour walked on were but tracks, not unlike those which modern travellers follow.

But the bridges are older, and in some places they are used for traffic to-day, spanning Jordan and Leontes. There is little causeway at the ends of them—their one business in these old days was to do the difficult and needful task of crossing water. Once across, the traveller might find his path or make it for himself. Parapets are not provided on the old bridges, and the surface is a flight of broad and shallow steps. If you walk unwarily and are drowned in the torrent below, that is no concern of these resolute but unluxurious bridge-builders. Their business is simply to span the stream. So effectively and conscientiously have they done this, that even when time and floods have broken the bridge, you may see the half of it still standing : the huge pier of stone and of mortar almost harder than stone stands at the side, and the actual arch is flung still across the water, wedged into an almost unbreakable strength by its keystone, while all the surface building above the arch has long been washed away. Such a ruin may be seen to-day on the coast some miles to the north of Tyre. It was in her fight

with water, either for it in aqueducts or against it in quays and bridges, that Rome seems to have put out her utmost strength of masonry. Along the coasts both of the Mediterranean and of the Sea ot Galilee, submerged stones and fragments of building may be seen, which bear testimony to this ; and at Taricheæ, where a large fish-curing trade had to be provided for, there are remains of a dam and quay where Jordan swept round in a circle, affording a great length ot water-frontage. But perhaps the most noticeable monuments of Rome in this dry and thirsty land are the aqueducts, sections of which still stand in many parts. In the neighbourhood of Jericho, Laurence Oliphant counted nine different aqueducts. At Khan Minyeh, believed by some to be the site of Capernaum, there is a bewildering mass of water-building of many sorts. A Wasserthurm still stands, whose walls are 12 feet in thickness, and in all directions water is carried at various levels in channels which run along the top of mighty banks of masonry. Great stone water-pipes, with rim and hollow for fitting to the next pipes tightly, lie scattered in all directions, peeping up through the long grass and ferns, or hiding among the roots of the thorn trees. Elsewhere are to be seen longer stretches of aqueduct, whose architects have been able to turn strength into beauty in a very wonderful fashion. Roman building at its best relies on the one principle of constructive truth. It never aims at being pretty ; it never fails in being *right* for the purpose it is meant to serve. From the point of view of beauty this may



THE LAKE OF GALILEE, LOOKING SOUTH FROM TIBERIAS

Two of the circular towers and wall which defended the ancient Tiberias are seen in the foreground, and a portion of the modern town with its northern gate. The hills to the left are on the eastern shore. Beyond their junction with the hills to the right on the western shore lie the Baths of Tiberias. The basaltic nature of the soil is shewn in the foreground.

The bottom of the lake must be light in tone, as is shewn by the green colour of its waters in the picture. The traditional deep-blue colour is only seen when there is a blue sky and no reflection of light from the bed of the lake. Early morning.





often have produced harsh, material, and heavy work —and indeed that is part of what we have already referred to as the limitation of Roman achievement. But the highest beauty is, after all, a matter far more of truth than of ornament, and there are many remains of Roman work in which such high beauty has been unconsciously attained. They built to accomplish some definite practical purpose, and for that end they built thoroughly and well. The result is the beauty which comes like a crown upon honest work beyond the design of the workers — a beauty of wholeness, adequacy, truth, which is perhaps not so far removed from the Hebrew idea of the "beauty of holiness" as careless observers might be disposed to think. This is seen in many a fragment of the Roman aqueducts. These irregular, three-tiered clusters of variously sized and shaped arches, carrying the stone or concrete channel across a gorge, have a real beauty of their own; and the long stretches of single or double tiers that take up the channel where it emerges from a mountain-tunnel, lead it high and secure across the treacherous ooze of a marsh, throw their level line on high bridges over ravines, and at last end in the tumbled ruins of a city whose pools and fountains they filled long ago—these have an indisputable beauty of workmanship and design, as well as an infinite pathos of sentiment.

Next in impressiveness to these monuments are the remains of the Greek amphitheatres of the Roman period. Whether it be that the massiveness of the stones has been too much for the lazy builders who

have constructed their modern dwellings out of stolen fragments of ruins; or whether, in its irony, history has attached to these monuments of Rome's attempt to amuse the world some special sacredness, it would be difficult to say. Certain it is that these in many places remain, sunk in the natural hollow of a hill as in a socket, while all traces of the city which once surrounded them have disappeared. They have been often described, both as they are found in Syria and elsewhere; and the stage arrangements, the underground passages, and the whole design of them does not materially differ from those of other countries. One feature in the Syrian theatres appears with special distinctness. When the play was going on, an awning may be supposed to have been spread horizontally over the roof, to shade spectators and actors from the sun. Between the edge of this awning and the flat top rim of the stage buildings, there would be a blank space left, as it were, like a framed and draped picture. The sites were so chosen that this space was filled up with some commandingly beautiful vista—in the north generally a view of Hermon. Hauran boasts many such theatres in the cities of the Decapolis. In cities which were first Greek and then Roman, such as these, it may be difficult to determine the exact date of a particular building. If the Romans built these theatres, they closely imitated the older Grecian work. They certainly built the theatre and hippodrome of Cæsarea, in which latter the goal-post is still to be seen, an immense granite stone, which has seen life in its day.

The theatres have, as a rule, survived the fortresses and the temples. Rome undertook many things. She would worship, govern, educate, amuse. Is it not significant that her wreck looks so like a gigantic playground, as if in those degenerate days of her conquest the Empire was already finding in the motto "il faut s'amuser" her rule of life? After all it is his chief interest that is the immortal thing about any man or nation. Yet this may be an unjust and fanciful estimate. Relics of Roman temples and fortresses also remain. A statue of Jupiter has had its resurrection from the sands of Gaza, and a monument in honour of Jupiter Serapis now bears a Roman inscription near the Zion Gate of Jerusalem. Near springs and the fountain-heads of rivers especially, the ruins of Roman shrines to the Genius of the fountain are found, as at Banias. Fortresses too, where Roman garrisons used to be located, can still be traced, in a ring or an oblong trail of loose stones. Such ruins crown the height of Tabor, the summit of Gerizim, and many another hill. But these shew little trace of their former meaning. Here and there the acropolis of a Greek or Roman town may retain its ancient embankment, built on the steep slope of the hill, as if shoring up the plateau above where the temple once stood. Elsewhere, some parts of the curtain wall of a crusader castle may be blocks of Roman fortification left *in situ*. But the greater part of the Roman building must be looked for in the walls of village houses, where the contrast between such fragments and their surroundings is as grotesque as

it is pitiful. The Gadarenes have built into their walls whatever lay nearest them. Coffins and tombstones, capitals and columns, even altars themselves are there, "stopping holes to keep the wind away"; it is exactly what "imperial Cæsar" has come to in Gadara. At the village of Kafr Hawar, where everything is called after Nimrod, we had heard that a small temple of the Roman period was to be seen. Under the guidance of a wily native, who afterwards turned out to be the Sheikh, we set out to seek for it. After various wanderings, we were shown one great stone, and some fresh-cut sections of aqueduct pipes, and were assured that these were all that was now left of the temple. "What had become of it, then?" "Oh, the Sheikh had built his new house of it." And, to be sure, there stood a new khan, enclosing a large space with its meaningless wall, whose stones were square-cut blocks, some black and others white, newly hewn out of the great stones of the temple. Little dreaming who the shabbily-dressed guide who told us these things was, we expressed ourselves in a manner whose virtue was freedom rather than urbanity. And we paid the man the bakhshish he demanded, little thinking that he was collecting for his building fund!

When Roman power decayed, the signs of its decadence were manifest in the departure from old severity into an efflorescence of ornament and a magnificence of mere size out of all proportion to the constructive meaning of the work. In Baalbek, Rome has left us a monument of such decadence. The

elaborated detail is foreign to the grand simplicity of the old Roman style, and the exaggerated size is but boastfulness. "The Romans had seen the huge Jewish stones at Jerusalem" (as Dr. Merrill explained the matter to us) "and began at Baalbek to work on a bigger scale, the Barnums of the ancient world, whose ambition was to run the biggest show on earth. By and by they got tired of that, and left it off; it was not their line, after all." "The line" of Rome was a very straight and simple one. With immense power and a great and single purpose, she went straight forward, and did what she meant to do. Hers was a rough simplicity which never failed. Strange that, with so mighty a resource, she should have ever gone out of her line to attempt any other work than her own! When men or nations discover their limitations, and rashly make up their mind no longer to stay within them, their ambition has already begun to foreshadow their downfall.

The pathos of seeing anything which evidently was once so competent and so strong, now so absolutely dead as Rome is, is heightened almost to weeping, in those places where the little and everyday memorials of her former life are commonest. It is not the gigantic monoliths, but the little tesseræ, not the fallen columns, but the broken jar-handles, that touch the heart most. Between Tyre and Sidon the rider passes over fields every stone of which is a fragment of some marble slab or curiously-carved piece of masonry. His horse is overturning the remains of Ornithopolis, "the city

of the bird," in these ploughed fields. But it is at Samaria that the emotion is most irresistible. Where the "fat valley" opens to the westward, a conical hill, slightly oval and with flattened top now clad with an orchard, nestles in and yet lies apart from the bend of the mountains of Ephraim. It was this hill that Omri bought from Shomer for the heavy price of two talents of silver. It was here that the city rose—the inferior houses (if we may reconstruct the probable past) of white brick, with rafters of sycamore; the grander ones of hewn stone and cedar—while the royal palace overtopped them all. A broad wall with terraced top encircled it, and the city lay there, "a vast luxurious couch, in which its nobles rested securely, 'propped and cushioned up on both sides as in the cherished corner of a rich divan.'" It was Ahab's capital too, and after the varying fortunes of centuries it was granted to Herod the Great by Augustus, who immediately called it by the Greek name of the emperor, Sebaste, and proceeded to rebuild it in a style of unheard-of magnificence. A hippodrome appeared in the hollow, a temple on the hill. Round the summit he ran a flat terrace with double colonnade of monolithic pillars about 16 feet in height, with palaces and massive gateways. From our camp on the threshing-floor, quite near the circuit of pillars—for many of them are still standing, and the bases of almost all may be seen in the ground—we crossed to within the ring of the colonnade. The ground was ploughed here even along the faces of the artificial terrace-banks,



SITE OF THE ANCIENT CITY OF SAMARIA

The remains of the ancient city are on the olive-clad hill to the left. The modern village with minaret, marking the site of the ruined church of St. John the Baptist (twelfth century), is seen on the lower slope of the hill to the right. The hills lying to the north are part of the mountains of Samaria in the direction of Jenin. Sunset effect.





which still preserve their sheer angle, clean and steep as of old. The furrows were literally sown with fragments of broken pottery and tesseræ. We crossed to a squared and heavy mass of fallen stones and carved pillars lying slantwise against walls still strong in ruin, which bears the name of Herod's daughter's palace; and then along the colonnade to the great piles of masonry which guard the gate that looks toward Cæsarea. Two massive towers are there, partly in ruins and soon to be wholly so, for the cactus hedge is busy with its roots among the stones, and is making its way through cracks to the very heart of the towers. We sat there watching the sun sink into the sea, and thought of all those faded splendours and crimes that make this spot so famous among the tragic places of the world. It was the home of Jezebel, it was the slaughter-house of Mariamne, both of whom must often have watched the sunset from that gate. The ambitions of the ancient kings, the pride and wealth and cruelty of Herod, the beauty and the misery of passionate women, dead these many centuries—all seemed to people the place with ghosts, as the twilight deepened. We turned to go back, and found ourselves accompanied by the man who farms the hill—a tall, friendly, and gracious man in long flowing robes. He held the hand of his little five-year-old girl, a dark-eyed, sweet-faced child, dressed in a red cloak crossed with blue and yellow stripes. Her hair was short, in clustering curls of glossy black, with a blue bead cunningly inwoven among them to keep off the evil eye.

She had her free hand entwined by all its fingers in the wool of a pet lamb, which she steered along sideways vigorously. How dead the mighty Herod and all the Roman glory seemed in contrast with this simple picture of the eternal life of home!

> Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
> Long ago;
> Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
> Struck them tame;
> And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
> Bought and sold.
> Now,—the single little turret that remains
> On the plains,
> By the caper over-rooted, by the gourd
> Overscored,
> While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
> Through the chinks—
> Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
> Sprang sublime,
> And a burning ring all round, the chariots traced
> As they raced,
> And the monarch and his minions and his dames
> Viewed the games.
>
> . . . .
>
> Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
> Earth's returns
> For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
> Shut them in,
> With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
> Love is best.[1]

It is not, however, merely with the chill of that which has been long dead that Rome affects us in Syria;

[1] "Love among the Ruins," Robert Browning.

it is with the living interest which attaches to all that touched Christ, and entered in any way into Christianity. It is a far-reaching generalisation which reminds us that "the great civilisations have always risen in the meeting-places of ideas."[1] Historically it is true that the times of greatest international struggle have been times of heightened vitality, when the mingling nations were ready to receive and to impart much, and to send forth a new spirit upon the world. Nothing could be more providentially apposite, from this point of view, than that Jesus should have been born "amid the fever of the establishment of the Roman power in Judea." He kept aloof, indeed, from the Herodian people who lived delicately in kings' houses, and from all the Greek and Græco-Roman life of his day. Yet, as Dr. Smith has shown us memorably, Jesus was no quiet rustic dreaming dreams and seeing visions far from the life of men. He lived and died in close touch with all that Rome, Greece, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Arabia had to show. Not for the first time, nor for the last, did He see, in His temptation, "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." As this realisation becomes more and more distinct, a new force is added to the contention that His Gospel is the Gospel for the world. It was thought out and first preached amid the throng of commerce, and while the din of battle was as yet hardly silent.

This contact of Jesus Christ with Rome, which under Paul's hand was to become the messenger and instru-

[1] *The Dawn of Art*, Martin Conway, pp. 58-76.

ment of His kingdom, is vividly associated with twc hill-tops in Palestine. One of them is that height near Nazareth, some ten minutes distant from the village well, the description of whose outlook closes the chapter on Galilee in the *Historical Geography* with the well-known passage about the boyhood of Jesus. There, while He faced seawards, lay on the left hand below Him the wine-coloured, battle-soaked plain of Jezreel, with squadrons of the Roman army marching east and west along it ; while on the right hand the Sepphoris Road ran ribbon-like along the ranges, with its constant stream of merchandise. The other hill-top is that known as " Gordon's Calvary " at Jerusalem—a low and rounded hillock just outside the Damascus Gate. If this be indeed the site of Calvary, Christ was crucified on a wedge of ground between a military and a commercial road ; and " they that passed by wagging their heads " may have been soldiers from the Tower as well as merchants from the Northern Gate.

Certain it is, at least, that Rome was about His cradle and His grave. The earliest narratives of His earthly career bring Him to Bethlehem to a Roman taxation ; the latest story delivers Him to a Roman judge, to Roman soldiers, and to a Roman cross.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIAN

FROM the invasion of warlike Rome we turn to that "Peace and her huge invasion" which came to the Holy Land during the later days of the Roman Empire. Before the time of Constantine the Church in Syria had grown and spread with such startling vitality and promise of even more abundant life as to bring down upon her the cruelty of persecutions. In the north the Christian communities were mainly Gentile, in the south Jewish Christians. They must have been intellectually as well as spiritually vigorous, for the curious speculations and mystic dreams of the Gnostics had already, in the second century, gained footing in Syrian Christianity.

With Constantine (324–337) Roman persecution ceased for ever. The Jews were permitted to return to Jerusalem, and the construction of the written Talmud began its career of three centuries. Julian, the last emperor on the throne before the Empire divided into east and west, had apostatised from the Christian faith before his ascension, and in 361 he attempted the restora-

tion of the temple in Jerusalem as a strength to Judaism against Christianity. But the Galilean had conquered, and it was the day of Christ. The recognition of Christianity as the religion of the State began a new era, which ran on for a thousand years in the Eastern Empire, until the siege of Constantinople changed the face of Europe in 1453. The words of Dante will often recur to the student of early Christian days in Palestine :—

> Ah ! Constantine, what evil came as child
> Not of thy change of creed, but of the dower
> Of which the first rich father thee beguiled.

The reference is to the legend of "The Donation of Constantine," by which he transferred Rome and the states of the Church to the Papal See. Christianity in Syria has run a strange career.

Up to the time of Constantine the Church was at bay, fighting a desperate battle against the Pagan world. At Cæsarea especially, but in many another Roman town besides, native Syrians were forced underground into caves and catacombs, or brought to the death in the public games. Many records of this period survive. At Sidon, searching about among the tombs which Renan has recently explored, we came upon a broken marble slab—evidently the lintel of a church raised in memory of a local massacre of Christians—with the word MARTURION inscribed on it. The martyr monuments of Syria are wonderfully full of peace, hope, and assurance. Like Marius the Epicurean you feel, when



THE CHAPEL OF THE TOMB OF THE VIRGIN AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

The Gothic façade is the front of a small building covering the entrance to the long flight of steps descending to the Tomb. The passage to the right, where there is a kneeling figure, leads to the Cavern of the Agony. Seated in front is a group of leper women who always congregate at this spot; the old man advancing towards them is a Greek monk. The hill behind, over which the moon has risen, is the Mount of Olives.





first you come upon them, that for the first time you are seeing the wonderful spectacle of *those who believe.* You understand his impression of every form of human sorrow assuaged—desire, and the fulfilment of desire working on the very faces of the aged, and the young men obviously persons who had faced life and were glad. And the same wistful sense of a sure word of revelation comes upon the beholder as that which appealed to him. Surely here the earth was for once not forsaken of the higher powers, but visited and spoken to and loved!

After Constantine the pilgrim takes the place of foremost interest, which the martyr previously held. From 451, when an independent patriarchate was established at Jerusalem, pilgrimages became very frequent; and a century later there were hospices with 3000 beds in them within Jerusalem, while trade of many sorts flourished by their aid. In the oldest itineraries there are very curious accounts of these pilgrimages; but two, which Colonel Conder gives, are especially quaint and interesting. They refer to later pilgrimages, but are appropriate enough to earlier ones. The first one is from Saewulf, giving an account of his landing at Jaffa: "From his sins, or from the badness of the ship," he was almost wrecked, and his companions were drowned before his eyes. The other is Sir John Maundeville's—most fascinating, if most unscrupulous of travellers: "Two miles from Jerusalem is Mount Joy, a very fair and delicious place. There Samuel the prophet lies in a fair tomb; and it is called Mount Joy

because it gives joy to pilgrims' hearts, for from that place men first see Jerusalem."

From the first, pilgrimage seems to have had its moral disadvantages and special temptations. At a village on the great Haj Road from Damascus to Mecca, we asked a crowd of natives whether any of them had been to Mecca with the Haj. A knowing laugh went round the circle as they all denied, until they remembered a man whose green turban stamped him a descendant of the Prophet. The man was brought forward and *accused* of having made the pilgrimage, an accusation to which he pled guilty with a confused smile that was evidently a screen for shame. The Turkish proverb runs, "If your friend has made the pilgrimage once, distrust him—if he has made the pilgrimage twice, cut him dead." And it would seem that the Christian pilgrim is not altogether in a position to throw stones at his Moslem brother. Apart from any sins to which the freedom of travel in a far land may be supposed to tempt poor human nature, there are some which are *par excellence* pilgrim sins. Thus we find in the seventeenth century the Armenian patriarch complaining that the seat in the Chapel of St. Helena in which he used to sit had been so hacked to pieces by relic-hunting pilgrims that he was "frequently obliged to renew it." The case was all the harder because it was not from its association with the patriarch, but because St. Helena had sat in it, that it was so much in request! If Mark Twain be a true reporter, there are pilgrims who have inherited that particular kind of moral frailty with remarkable



THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE FROM THE GARDEN OF THE GREEK MONASTERY


May. 1901 Jerusalem
Church of the Holy Sepu



fidelity to the manners of their predecessors. Then again, the pilgrimages, which everywhere stimulated trade, created an amazing amount of fraud in the sale of false relics and other such traffic. Dr. Conan Doyle's picture of the pilgrim in France, who takes a nail from the box of a blacksmith and sells it to unsuspecting soldiers as one of those which were driven into the wood of the true Cross, is drawn from the life. Even on the sacred spots themselves the simplicity of pilgrims has always been a temptation to custodians. A tale is told of some one who, only a year or two ago, dropped by accident a Bible down the dry shaft of Jacob's Well. The Bible was claimed within a few days, but when brought up it was a mere mass of pulp. A large party of pilgrims had visited the place in the interval, and had professed a strong desire to drink water from the famous well. A small stream, conveniently diverted to the well mouth, had enabled the priest in charge to gratify their desire by draughts of water drawn from the depths before their eyes.

The pilgrim is still extant. For well-nigh two thousand years he has come and gone, a tourist who has always had an immense commercial value for the Holy Land. The levy made on pilgrims at the gate of Jerusalem was one of the principal causes of the Crusades, and it is hardly more than a hundred years since a heavy tax was imposed upon every pilgrim when he reached the gate of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The greater part of those who come now are Russians. Jaffa is full of them, but they are to be seen in long caravans

of pedestrians, with a donkey or two bearing all their scanty luggage, as far north as Samaria and Galilee. The men are typical Russian peasants, in the blouses and caps that are so familiar. Their long hair may be fair or dark, but it is always matted and coarse. The women, with their good, weather-beaten faces, are uncommonly like old-fashioned peasant women from the northern Scottish countrysides. Their head-dress is a simple kerchief, and their hands grasp a rude pilgrim staff polished with much wear. The privations of such pilgrimages must be very great. They involve the expenditure of a lifetime's savings, and a journey in many cases of at least six months. Most of this is done on foot, and largely by people who are growing old. There is no nation that could send forth such multitudes except "rough but believing Russia." The belief is everything. They are very poor people, and very ignorant and simple. Yet many whose minds' conflict seems only to grow sterner in this land of contradictions, may own without shame to a touch of something like envy as they see the exaltation of their childish faith. They encompass the walls of Jerusalem to the strains of Psalms, and march triumphantly to the sand south of Jaffa for shells to authenticate their travels, such as those which appear on the coats-of-arms of some European families, telling of former pilgrimages. Mere children in intellect, the gleam in their eyes tells that in their own pathetic way they have entered here into a veritable kingdom of heaven.

The objects of pilgrimage are somewhat gruesome in



THE ANOINTING STONE FROM THE AMBULATORY OF THE CRUSADERS' CHURCH

THE steps to the left, on which are Russian peasants, lead to the Golgotha Chapels. The Anointing Stone, a plain slab about 8 feet long, lies on the pavement, and is marked by three lofty candlesticks at each end; two of them Italian bronze of the sixteenth century, the others brass.





their way. A favourite ambition used to be that of measuring the "stone of anointing" in the Holy Sepulchre, in order to have the pilgrim's own winding-sheet made the same length. The great goal, however, is the Jordan, whose banks at the period after Constantine used to be paved with marble. In the old time a wooden cross was erected in mid-stream, and the waters were blessed by a priest, after which the pilgrims tumbled in with such haste that often numbers of them were drowned. Here, too, the winding-sheet is in evidence. Besides the flask of Jordan water which they fill, they dip their own winding-sheets and those of friends at home who have been unable to come in person, but have sent these pale substitutes. It was not our good fortune to see the merry band of pilgrims at the Jordan, though we met scattered groups of Russians in many places. One other pilgrim we saw, and he accompanied us through several days' march northward. He was a jet-black Abyssinian—a lonely and silent figure clad from head to foot in a loose robe of pure white sackcloth. He went with us to Nazareth, the destination of his pilgrimage. His only word in common with us was "Christianus," and he always bowed and crossed himself when he said it. All day long he walked in silence in our company. He asked for nothing, but ate the meat he received in singleness of heart, and sat apart watching the loading and unloading of the baggage with the eyes of a great child.

While so many Christians paid a passing visit to

Palestine in the early days, there were some who came to stay. It was the time of the rise of monastic institutions, which first appear in the beginning of the fourth century. Their history from the first is peculiarly associated with Syria, into which they spread almost immediately after their start in Egypt. Some of the most famous of the early recluses, including even St. Symeon Stylites himself, were of Syrian origin.[1] These ascetics were the natural successors of the martyrs. The first hints of them are given during the time of earlier martyrdoms, for it is recorded that Christians as early as the Decian persecutions fled to the wilderness and led a life there which was soon to become popular beyond all possibility of forecast.

It was not, however, until Constantine's favour had secularised the Church, or at least had made easy that life that hitherto had been so dangerous, that the reaction set in which gave monasticism its great hold on the world. This is generally explained as a matter solely of protest against growing worldliness, or a development of that curious kind of "other-worldliness" which finds in asceticism the surest means of attaining earthly fame and heavenly reward. No doubt both these elements are true. In the early asceticism there was a self-denial prompted by the purest desire for escape from the defiling society of their time into the spiritual cleanness of the faith, and from its hard and coarse materialism into the delicate ideality and refinement of Christian thought and feeling. It was

[1] St. Symeon was a shepherd from the borderland between Cilicia and Syria.

also, on the other hand, a refuge and an outlet for much of the inefficiency and moral worthlessness of the time, which found in its freedom from social restraint and its wide leisure things exactly to their own taste. But behind all this there is another fact which is really the most significant of all. Monasticism was "the compensation for martyrdom." Readers of the letters of Ignatius are familiar with that mania for martyrdom which during persecuting times took possession of so many in the Church. In abnormal and extreme conditions such as these, certain minds grow hysterical and lose their perspective and sense of proportion altogether. In such minds a morbid and passionate delight in pain develops into a sort of lust —a *religiosa cupiditas*—for suffering torture, just as in the persecutors cruelty becomes a lust for inflicting it. So asceticism offered itself when martyrdom could no longer be had—"a voluntary martyrdom, a gradual self-destruction, a sort of religious suicide."[1]

The new ideal passed through several successive phases. From an unorganised and individual way of life within the Church, it developed first into anchoretism about the beginning of the fourth century. In barren and solitary places, where life at best was precarious and physical enjoyment impossible, every cave and den had its tenant. On Mount Sinai one hermit is said to have lived for fifty years in absolute solitude, silence, and nakedness. As you ride down the terrific gorges from Mar Saba to the Dead Sea, you

[1] Cf. Schaff's *Church History, Nicene and Post-Nicene Period*, chap. iv

pass along precipitous hillsides and rock-faces which appear literally riddled with small caves and holes in the rock and sand. These, which now serve for a covert from the heat for passing shepherds, or for the lairs of jackals, were once populated by hermits. Saint Saba is said to have collected the bones of no fewer than 10,000 solitary dwellers in this district, who had fallen victims to the Carismians. And in many parts of Syria even now, a hillside which during the day has seemed barren of all human habitation, is unexpectedly illuminated with hermits' lights—those "hands praying to God"—in the dark. The enthusiasm with which this dreary life has filled some of its devotees may be realised in the following lines from an epistle of St. Jerome:—"O desert, where the flowers of Christ are blooming! O solitude, where the stones for the new Jerusalem are prepared! O retreat, which rejoices in the friendship of God! What doest thou in the world, my brother, with thy soul greater than the world? How long wilt thou remain in the shadow of roofs, and in the smoky dungeon of cities? Believe me, I see here more of the light."[1]

It was in cloister life, however—at first in smaller communities and then on the large scale of many cloisters gathered under a common rule—that early Christianity reached its full development. Besides the native establishments, there was, in the first centuries after Constantine, a cloud of religieux, flying like homing doves across the sea to alight and quietly settle down

[1] St. Jerome, Ep. xiv.



THE DOMES OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE
FROM A HOUSE-TOP ON MOUNT ZION

THE blue dome is over the site of the Sepulchre. The red dome is over the east end of the Church of the Crusaders (Greek Cathedral). In the foreground to the left is part of the Coptic Monastery; in the distance Mount Scopas.





on holy soil. These establishments had many faults. They perpetuated little sectarian differences and exaggerated them into quite ridiculous importance. The very lamps that hang in the oldest churches are denominational, and are divided with a childish arithmetic among rival sects. The insistence of these on their respective rights is such that a guard of armed Moslem soldiers has to be kept perpetually on the spot to keep the peace. Yet there is a splendid dash of courage in this part of Church History, which cannot possibly have been all in vain. It must have been an exciting life in some of the outpost stations in these old days. "It is true," says Warburton of one monastery, "the monks were occasionally massacred by the Saracens, Turks, and Carismians, but their martyrdom only gave fresh interest to the spot in the eyes of their successors." No doubt these establishments drained the world of some of its best manhood, and diverted much greatly needed energy from family life and state loyalties; yet, on the other hand, these were the soldiers of the Cross who then fought the paganism of the world and conquered it.

Monastic establishments still remain, and supply much-needed inns to many thousands of poor travellers in Syria. They vary by very wide degrees of difference from one another. By far the worst place we saw in Palestine—one of the worst perhaps that could be seen anywhere—is the convent of Mar Saba near the Dead Sea. Coming out on the high ridge of the Judean mountain country, we caught a glimpse of two towers,

which we have already described,[1] square and blind, and so pitilessly unsuggestive that they seemed, as it were, built into the desert, or part of its fantastic offspring. They were the most unhomely buildings we had ever seen, and they are the nearest point to which women are allowed to approach the monastery, lady travellers being accommodated with cells there if they have not tents. By and by we passed between them, down a road so steep as to be practically a stairway, on every step of which loathsomely dirty beggars sat plying their trade. In the courtyard to which this entrance led were two monks, fat and stupid-looking, who brought out strings of beads, rosaries, and crosses of their own manufacture for sale. Having, apparently, absolutely nothing to do, the making of these things may be taken for sign of enterprise and commercial genius, but as time is evidently valueless, they sell their work very cheap. To the right was a rock, hollowed out into a chamber or broad gallery, which is sacred as having been the shrine of Saint Saba's devotions. The entrance is violently coloured in washes of blue and white paint, so crude and aggressive that it quite robs the pictures in the interior of their horror, and prepares you to look with unclouded eye upon the skulls which fill the grilled recesses. One of these skulls is set in front, to receive the kisses of devout pilgrims. It is deeply worn and polished. When it has actually been worn through to a hole it will be replaced, as others

[1] Cf. pp. 27, 30.



THE FORECOURT OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

Of the two doorways in the south façade of the Church, only the eastern, which is walled up, can be seen. The two pointed windows above give light to chambers over the portal. The whole of the front, though built by the Crusaders, presents distinctly Oriental features. The dome of the Crusaders' Church (Greek Cathedral) rises above. The steps to the right of the walled-up doorway lead up to the Chapel of the Agony. The building to the right of the picture is the Armenian Chapel, that to the left is the apse of the Greek Chapel of St. James. The centre of the Court is always occupied by vendors of rosaries, eikons, and other memorials of the Holy Places.





have been before it. Across the courtyard you follow narrow stairs and galleries that run irregularly along the edge of a precipice; for the monastery has affixed itself to the face of a cliff four hundred feet high. It clings there, supported by huge flying buttresses that spring from the depths below in a fashion which, as one writer says, remind you of pictures of Belshazzar's feast. The cells of the monks, little disconnected "lean-to" sheds or caves, have the Greek cross upon their doors, and the often-repeated inscription, "O Christ, abide with us!" Here and there are a few plants in pots, or a feeble attempt at rearing vegetables in little garden patches which fill in any foot of level among the many-cornered buildings; while in one cranny grows the solitary date-palm which Saint Saba planted more than 1300 years ago. At every few yards you pause to look over a low balustrade into the gorge, which here is a sort of yellow-ochre gulf, with all the horror but none of the rich depth of colouring that belongs to frightful abysses. Over these walls the monks throw meat to the jackals which come and fight for it below. Occasionally, as we passed, a face was visible at a window, generally either wizened and dried up, or with a white, neurotic appearance that was almost more repulsive. Everywhere dirt reigned supreme —unspeakable filth in open drains and putrid litter. In one place, where the smell was sickening, a monk was lying asleep by the side of a broken drain, covered with flies in great black masses on his face and arms.

In another place an abominable-looking dish of food, fly-blown and disgusting, was pushed with a spoon in it half through a hole broken in the bottom of a cell door. And everywhere throughout this palace of disgust was to be read the prayer, "O Christ, abide with us!"

That was the worst. Mar Saba is a sort of combination of prison and asylum, where lunatics are kept under the charge of monks condemned to this place for heresy or immorality. Other monasteries we saw, of a very different kind. Our tents precluded the necessity for our making any of these our home for the night, but in many cases it would have been very pleasant to do so. On the top of Tabor, at Tell Hum on the Sea of Galilee, and in other places, we were received and entertained with the most cordial and generous hospitality. The clean and spacious guest-chambers are open to all comers. They are adorned with photographs of various sorts, and often contain a cabinet of rare local curiosities. The brothers in charge of these establishments were fine genial men, courageously facing the risks of fever in deadly spots, or varying their hospitable labours on the heights by long seasons of study (for some of them are distinguished scholars); but always ready to meet a stranger as a friend, and to chat with him in French or German, over a pipe of Western tobacco, about the great world from which they had gone so far.

In all these ways the many-sided life of the old Christian days lingers and may still be seen. But it

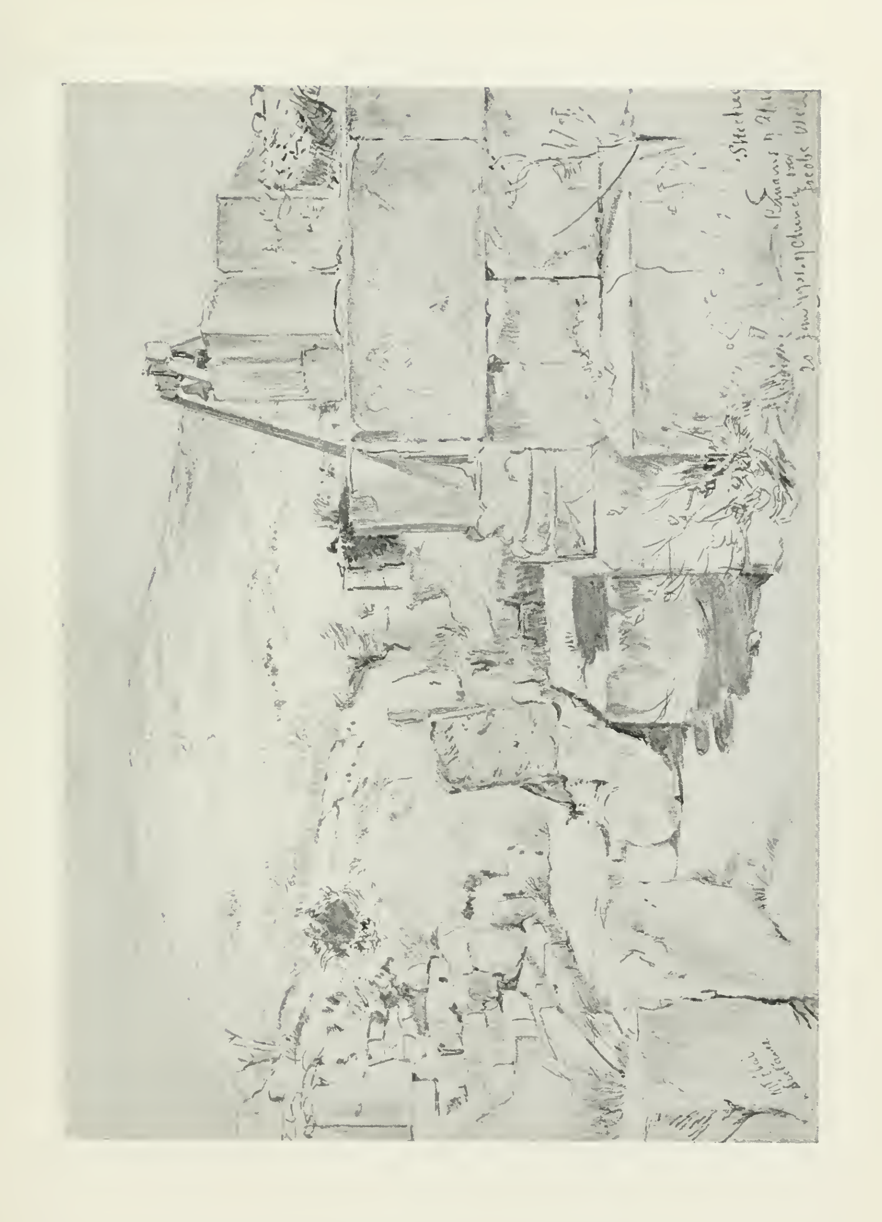


APSE OF THE FOURTH-CENTURY CHURCH
OVER JACOB'S WELL AT SHECHEM
(NABLUS)

THE masonry to the right forms part of the interior of the Apse. Traces of the decoration of the walls are seen on the large stone.

The bells are used for the chapel beneath, over the well.

The hill behind is Mount Ebal.





lingers more impressively in the most ancient of the churches which date from this period. There is in Palestine an astonishing number of ruins of old Christian churches, many of them dating back, at least so far as their foundations go, to the Byzantine period. There are many modern churches, but they are not as a rule impressive. Even when, as in the Russian church at Gethsemane, the building is in itself rich and costly, it is so irrelevant as to rouse a feeling of rebellion.

Most of the ancient churches have utterly vanished, like that roofless basilica which Constantine built on the supposed scene of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives. In other cases they are mere heaps of ruin, like the remaining fragments of the Church of Jacob's Well, which was built about the middle of the fourth century, and has been several times rebuilt since then. This church takes most travellers by surprise. They go expecting an out-door scene, with all the harvest breeze of the Scripture story on it. They find a newly built white wall, glaring in the sunshine. Through a gate in this wall they are admitted by certain broken-down-looking persons in the greenish-black garments of the Greek clergy. Within the gate, a few steps bring them to the edge of a sort of oblong pit full of masonry. It is the nave of the old church, and the splendidly carved pillars of its white stone show how beautiful it must have been. A door in the sunk side-wall opens upon a groined vault newly rebuilt. In the dim light you can discern in the centre a rough stone altar, with candles and lamps and a couple of execrable pictures of

Christ and the woman of Sychar. On the ground before the altar is a flat stone perforated with a hole two feet in diameter. This is the cover of the well, and a second clerical person, badly marked with smallpox, lets down a twist of lighted candles by a long rope, while a little green lamp of silver hangs above, dripping oil steadily down the well. Surely this is the infatuation of reverence! If there is any memory of Jesus which is essentially of the open air, it is this incident of the Well of Samaria. Yet reverence must build its dark chamber, and proceed to illuminate with candles the spot where Jesus sat and saw the miles and miles of waving fields, white already to harvest. No doubt the church dates from the fourth century; but what right had even the ancients to build a church here, to keep men busy with their sectarianism on the very spot where they and all the world were told that the hour was come when neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem would the Father be worshipped, but in spirit and in truth?

There are, however, two great churches of this ancient time which waken feelings very different from these; they have been for centuries the centres of Christian interest and devotion in the land, covering, as they are supposed to do, the sites of the birth and death of Jesus Christ. In some respects they are alike. The outsides of them are huddled and packed together, a heterogeneous mass of apparently unrelated buildings. The insides are not, like the houses, Rembrandt studies in intense light and shadow. By some skilful arrangement, the sunlight seems to be caught and diffused in a pale



JACOB'S WELL AT SHECHEM (NABLUS)

In the centre of the foreground is the head of the well, with its opening deeply scored by the marks of the ropes used for drawing water. Behind is an altar on which Mass is celebrated according to the Greek rite. The Greek monk in charge of the site is standing by a fragment of a column, no doubt from the fourth-century Church above.


Jacobs Well
Shechem
20 : June · 1901 ·



luminous twilight that sinks gradually to darkness in chapels and recesses, and blends with the light of many lamps and candles not unpleasingly. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the gift of St. Helena, mother of Constantine, and was consecrated by her in A.D. 336. Tradition relates how, at the age of seventy-nine, she made her pilgrimage to Jerusalem, was baptized in Jordan, discovered the true Cross, and built the church upon the spot of its discovery. Our guide-book tells us of an ante-chamber "where Oriental Christians are in the habit of removing their shoes, though we need not follow their example." Yet the Crusaders entered it barefooted, though with songs of praise, a thousand years ago; and the impulse of most Christians, however little they may be disposed to believe in the identity of the sacred sites within, will be to share the veneration of the Easterns. Not that what we see now is the original building. That was a rotunda and a basilica, the former quite other than the present rotunda, as we know from the fact that it formed the model for the Mosque of Omar. It has suffered many things from assault, from decay, from fire, and from rebuilding. In the twelfth century the whole group of detached shrines and monuments was included for the first time in one huge and complicated building. Probably no such patchwork in stone is to be seen elsewhere in the world. Yet each rebuilding found many of the older materials ready for its use, and incorporated them in the newer work. Thus the columns at the eastern door are supposed to have come from some ancient

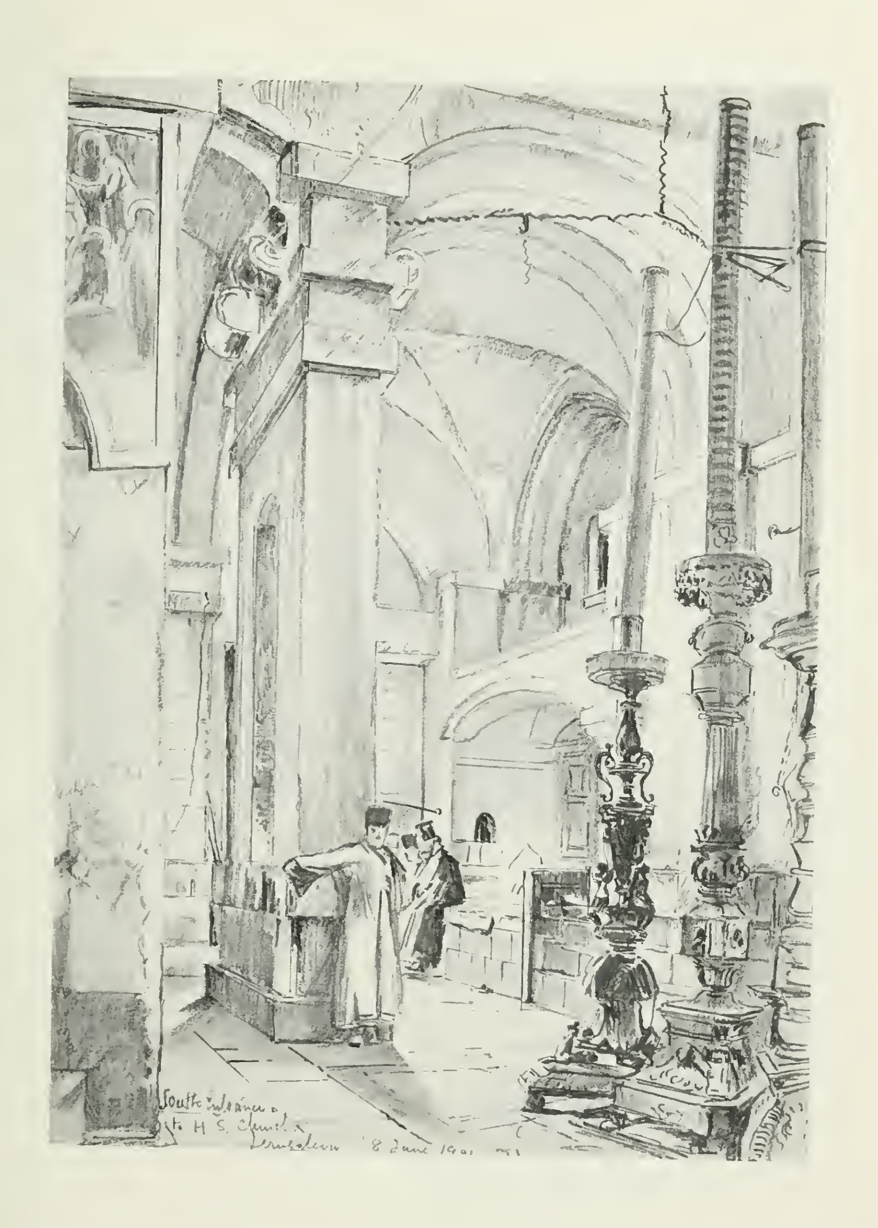
pagan temple, and the present foundations of the pillars belong to the old rotunda. The capitals of many pillars are Byzantine, while the pink limestone column which is embedded in the wall to the right of the eastern entrance is also very ancient.

It is a strange conglomeration of imaginary associations and real value of material. The atmosphere is at times dreadful enough within to justify that daring little touch of realism in the French bas-relief over the door, where some of the spectators at the raising of Lazarus are holding their noses with their hands! The chapel of the Empress adjoins the altar of the Penitent Thief; Adam and Abraham jostle each other for standing ground under the sacred roof; the stone of anointing has been "often changed" according to the guide-book, and the column of scourging "judging from the narratives of different pilgrims, must frequently have changed its colour and its size"—yet pilgrims poke a stick at it and kiss the part that has touched the stone to-day. Every incident of the world's great tragedy is commemorated there, from the footprint of Jesus to the silver socket in the rock where His Cross was erected. Futile enough all this, and even wearisome. But the worship of fifteen hundred years is neither futile nor wearisome. And that worship seems to detach itself from the legends and find its embodiment in the marvels of precious stone that are gathered there. As one sees the slabs of costly stone with which the rock is overlaid—the ruddy yellow slab of the "anointing," the red and white polished limestone of the central shrine,



THE VESTIBULE OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

THE three lofty candlesticks stand at the east end of the Stone of Anointing; the farther one is Italian bronze of the sixteenth century. The divan in the recess is that of the Mohammedan Sheikhs who have the custody of the Church.


South entrance
to H S. Church
Jerusalem 8 June 1901



the green serpentine and the black basalt—one remembers the tomb which the Roman bishop ordered in St. Praxed's, with its "peach-blossom marble," its lump of *lapis lazuli*, "blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast," and its block of jasper, "pure green as a pistachio-nut." But there is a difference. The stones of the Holy Sepulchre were given in love: they are the tribute of many souls whose adoration was the noblest feature of their times.

The Church of the Holy Nativity at Bethlehem is a simpler and, to many minds, a more impressive structure. It consists of a broad nave, entirely screened off from what lies beyond, with two rounded transepts and a rounded apse behind the screen—this trefoil-shaped inner building being the church proper. One of the transepts is the property of the Armenians; the other, together with the great altar in the apse, belongs to the Greeks. Below the great altar-rail ("in the breast of God," in Dante's language) is the cave of the Nativity, with steps leading down to it from either transept. A Mohammedan soldier stands at the bottom to keep the peace between Christians. The transepts and apse are ablaze with lamps and hangings. Below, the "manger" is overlaid with coloured marble, and the rock is entirely covered with yellow silk cloth, on which are stamped the insignia of the Franciscans—an arm of Christ crossed with an arm of St. Francis, both shewing the print of nails in the palms of their hands. All this, and the air of raree-show that exhibits so many spots where somebody or other stood, destroy any

lingering credulity of which a man may still find himself capable; they make one rather ashamed, and glad to escape. But the nave is mighty in its simplicity, and no less mighty in its wealth of historical association. It is a great severe oblong basilica, with four rows of massive pillars giving double aisles. Old glass and old mosaics add their appropriate wealth of sombre beauty. The rafters, replacing Constantine's beams of cedar from Lebanon, are the gift of Philip of Burgundy. Lead for the roof was sent by Edward IV. of England. Most impressive of all is the old plain font of polished stone, with its Greek inscription—not, like so many such inscriptions, a record ot the donor's name, but a prayer for God's blessing upon those who gave it—"whose names are known to Thee only." Opinions differ as to the plausibility of the claim to the site of our Lord's nativity; but this church was built by Constantine, and the Vulgate was written in it by Jerome. And since that time the feet of countless millions of worshippers have trodden its stone pavement—a consecration in itself worth many traditional sanctities.

In this chapter we have sought to gather the most obvious survivals of that old Christian invasion of Palestine which followed next after the Roman. Almost inevitably we find ourselves quarrelling with the legendary lore that has stultified so many venerable buildings and associations. Yet in its legends too the early Church survives, and some of them embody eternal truths in forms of rare beauty. Take three of the legends of the Holy Sepulchre by way of example. They show the



THE ROTUNDA AND CHAPEL OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

THREE of the great piers which support the drum of the Rotunda are seen to the left, together with the gallery which runs round the building.

The Chapel of the Sepulchre, built of red and white polished limestone, occupies the centre of the Rotunda. The great candlesticks mark the entrance, which is from the east. Only a portion of the cupola, in the centre over the Sepulchre, is shewn, together with the east end of the main structure, called the Chapel of the Angels, containing the stone said to be that which the Angel rolled from the mouth of the Sepulchre.

The two rounded openings near which the Franciscan friar is standing, with the two corresponding ones on the opposite side of the Chapel, are the apertures from which the Holy Fire is passed to the pilgrims on Easter Eve.

The diameter of the Rotunda is 65 feet. The external measurements of the Chapel of the Sepulchre are about 15 feet by 25 feet.





spot where the one-eyed soldier Longinus, who pierced the side of Christ, received back the lost eyesight at the touch of a drop of the blood. There, too, is the cleft in the rock through which blood flowed from the Cross down into the tomb of Adam, whose corpse came to life at once. And there, on Easter Eve, the sham miracle of the "Holy Fire" has been enacted annually for at least a thousand years. Who can miss the underlying truth beneath these legends? They are, for all but the ignorant and the gross, symbols of the eternal healing and quickening power that the love and sacrifice of Christ exert on humanity and even on His enemies. The torch-bearers, who kindle their fires at the blaze on Easter Eve, and speed thence to Bethlehem and other towns to light from it the candles waiting on many altars, tell their own exhilarating lesson. Two other legends may be mentioned, which the Western world owes to the Syrian Church—those of St. George and St. Christopher. St. George, who was a Roman soldier under Diocletian, was martyred in A.D. 303. His memory, mixed up with the Greek myth of Perseus and Andromeda, and with Crusader stories of Richard Cœur de Lion, stands for the victory of faith over paganism. St. Christopher would only follow the strongest, and finding that his master the devil was afraid of Christ, renounced his service and set out to seek Him who was strongest of all. The point of the story is that, after seeking Christ far and wide, he found Him while he was performing the humble task of carrying passengers across a river. It is characteristic

of the pilgrim point of view that legend has fixed this scene not by some homely German stream but at the fords of Jordan, where he is said to have carried the infant Christ across upon his shoulder. Even of such legends no wise man will speak with scorn. They, too, are monuments of that conquest of Christ which gives its meaning and its glory to the Christian invasion.



THE DOME OF THE ROCK (MOSQUE OF OMAR) AS SEEN FROM THE PORCH ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE MOSQUE EL AKSA

THE flight of steps in front is the westernmost of the two flights leading up to the platform of the Dome of the Rock on its southern side. Through the arcade, at the head of the stairs, is seen part of the outer walls of the Mosque, covered with marble and Persian tiles; also one half of the south portal, the only entrance retaining its ancient form, with an open arch and eight free standing columns. The lofty cypresses on each side of the picture are of immemorial antiquity and are the finest trees in the Temple Area. The brilliant morning light displays admirably the form of the Dome, and imparts a warm colour to the grey leaden covering. The large round basin, called El Khas, in the foreground, was once fed by a conduit from the Pools of Solomon.





CHAPTER IV

MOSLEM

Mohammedanism is the religion which is everywhere in evidence in the East to-day. From the smart Turkish officer who drops in to smoke a cigarette with you in the tent after dinner, and discusses European politics in excellent French, down to the beggar who beseeches you in the name of Allah for a pipeful of tobacco or the end of your cigar, your acquaintance in Syria is Moslem. From the consecration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to the Moslem capture of Jerusalem was exactly three hundred years. When, in 637, Jerusalem fell, Damascus had already fallen, and Antioch was to follow next year — all within sixteen years of the beginning of the Mohammedan era. The conquest was inevitable. First Persia and then the scattered tribes of pagan Arabs had proved too much for the Byzantine empire in Syria. Then the man appeared who understood his opportunity. The Eastern world was in confusion. Heathens constituted the ruling race, the Jews were scattered in their dispersion, and the Christians torn into many fragmentary heretical

sects. It was the moment for a great union of scattered forces. The Arabs were united by the new faith in God, for which they abandoned their paganism with a marvellous willingness. The bond of union with Christians and Jews was the common ancestry in Abraham by which Mohammed hoped to rally and unite the Syrian world. One sharp battle at the Yarmuk threw Syria open to his advance, and the crisis of the faith was past.

Mohammed has been declared an impostor, who from first to last won his way by cleverness without faith; he has been idealised as a hero and prince of heroes in the religious world. Dean Milman, perhaps, is wisest when he says, "To the question whether Mohammed was hero, sage, impostor, or fanatic . . . the best reply is the reverential phrase of Islam: 'God knows.'" One thing is certain, viz., that he founded a religion which proved itself capable of wakening response from the Semitic East with a swiftness and a completeness never elsewhere known. It would be a matter of rather serious consequences to affirm that such sweeping success is possible without any vestige of honest faith on the part of its own prophet.

Arabia found Islam a religion after her own heart. The conquest of the Arabian mind, and that sudden transference of religious and political loyalties which changed it from chaos into cosmos, is little short of miraculous. In the words of one of the severest critics of Islam: "In A.D. 570, Abdullah, the son of Abd el Muttalib, a Mecca merchant,



THE DOME OF THE ROCK (MOSQUE OF OMAR) FROM THE BARRACKS NEAR THE SITE OF THE TOWER OF ANTONIA

The north porch of the Dome of the Rock is towards the spectator ; to the left is the Dome of the Chain ; to the right, in the middle distance, is the Mosque of El Aksa. The buildings in the foreground are Sheikhs' houses. The flight of steps and arcade are at the north-west corner of the upper platform of the Dome of the Rock.

The height of the platform at this corner is clearly indicated by the retaining wall. The level ridge of the mountains of Moab and a portion of the range of the Judean hills bound the distant prospect. Time, early morning.





went on a trading trip from Mecca to Medina and died there ; the same year his wife, Amina, gave birth to a boy, named Mohammed, at Mecca. One hundred years later the name of this Arab lad, joined to that of the Almighty, was called out from ten thousand mosques five times daily, from Muscat to Morocco, and his new religion was sweeping everything before it in three continents."[1] In many ways the new religion was congenial to Arabia. "Although it made a most vigorous effort to conquer the world, it is, after all, a religion of the desert, of the tent, and the caravan, and is confined to nomad and savage or half-civilised nations, chiefly Arabs, Persians, and Turks. It never made an impression on Europe except by brute force ; it is only encamped, not really domesticated, in Constantinople, and when it must withdraw from Europe it will leave no trace behind."[2] It gave the heathen Arabs, in exchange for their precarious dependence on incalculable and wayward gods, the sublime conception of "Islam," the absolute surrender to the One God, whom it declared to be Almighty, All-Wise, and All-Merciful. For the rest, its secret was simplicity. It drove straight for its object, sacrificing art, appetite, the purity of home life, the spirituality of religious imagination, and some of the accepted moralities of conscience. What was left was a creed and standard, somewhat impoverished truly, but workable and uncompromising. A thousand difficult questions were avoided, and one of those forces set in

[1] *Arabia, the Cradle of Islam*, Zwemer, p. 179.
[2] *Mediæval Christianity*, Schaff, p. 150.

play before whose rough simplicity finer and more delicate things are swept away.

Mohammedanism meets the traveller at every turn in Syria. Now and then a dervish is encountered—the extremest sort of Moslem. It would seem difficult to develop a mystic school within the pale of so clear-cut a faith as Mohammedanism ; yet it has been done. But the Mohammedan dervishes escape from this despised material world by the vulgar process of hypnotising themselves by the repetition of the word "Allah" or "Hu," or by whirling in circles until they are stupefied. This they call the ecstatic state, and when they have reached it they are said to perform many violent tricks, stabbing their flesh or eating broken glass, without appearing to feel pain. In Syria they are by no means impressive in appearance. Here and there you meet one, with hair crimped in long thin pointed wisps, and sticking out in a wiry fashion from his head in all directions. The dazed and rather weak look in the eyes is suggestive of a strayed reveller rather than a holy man, but the people hold them in great reverence.

Another occasional freak of Mohammedanism is the religious procession, which is conducted on the principle of a rival show to the Christian fêtes. It starts on Good Friday from Jerusalem to visit the tomb of Moses—a late fiction, somewhat daring in its contradiction to the old belief that the tomb of Moses was known to no man. It is amusingly described by witnesses, but appears to be rather a poor affair on the whole.



INTERIOR OF THE MOSQUE OF EL AKSA FROM THE SOUTH-EAST

The soffits of the arches, the spandrels and the drum of the dome, as well as the dome itself, are covered with green and gold mosaic. The windows above, which are those of the drum, are filled with stained glass. The columns are of antique coloured marble connected by wooden tie-beams painted and carved. The pulpit to the left, placed here by Saladin, stands immediately to the west of the *Mihrab* (recess marking the direction of Mecca), which is, however, hidden by a column. Opposite the pulpit, on the right-hand side of the picture, is seen part of the *Dikkeh*, or raised platform from which the Koran is recited. The arched openings in the distance lead to the long pointed arcade to the west erected by the Knights Templars, to whom El Aksa was allotted during the Christian occupation of Jerusalem.





These extravagances apart, one is never out of sight of Mohammedan religion for an hour of travel in Syria. The worship, like old idolatry, seems to have claimed every high hill and every green tree for its own. It has settled itself, in the very seat of old Judaism, on the sacred area of the temple. Almost every one of the prominent hills of Palestine is crowned with a little building, domed and whitewashed, opening in a porch in front, and containing a single empty chamber. This is the weli (*i.e.* monument, not necessarily tomb) of a Mohammedan saint. What the terms of canonisation may be, it is perhaps best not to inquire too minutely. Many of these departed saints are said to have been prophets, but the discoverer of coffee has his monument in Mocha, to which great processions come, and there is more than one weli in Palestine commemorative of a dead robber chief. Not the less sacred are they to the Mohammedans. In various parts of the country we were puzzled by little piles of stones, gathered and arranged in considerable numbers on the tops of long ascents or passes, and bearing a curious resemblance to the cairns which in certain districts of the west of Scotland mark the spots at which funeral processions have halted to change the coffin-bearers. The explanation of these little piles is very simple. When a Mohammedan comes to the hill-top, and looking around him sees a weli shining in the distance, he offers up a prayer, and drops a stone there, to call the attention of the next comer, that he also may look and pray. Very picturesque and quaint these little holy houses are;

serving, like the hermit's tower of old in Western lands, for landmarks as well as for shrines—the white lighthouses of the inland.

It is not at the white tombs only that the Moslem prays. Five times a day, at the call from the mosque, he is summoned to his devotions. Often, indeed, it is inconvenient to worship at some of these hours, and it is permissible to say the prayer five times in succession in the evening, when there is most leisure. Sometimes he carries with him his rosary, to help his memory with the ninety-nine beautiful names of Allah, and in railway trains or steamers wealthy gentlemen are to be seen cherishing a string of amber beads which appear more like the property of young girls than of grown men. To perform his devotions the Syrian goes to a fountain, when that is possible, as it is part of the ritual to wash the hands before praying; but the Arab, spreading his carpet in the shade of his camel, far away upon the desert, where no water is to be had but the precious drops in his leathern bottle, is permitted to wash his hands and lips with sand instead. That which impresses every spectator is the extraordinary faculty for abstraction which is manifested. The Moslem seems to have at command the power of annihilating the world around him, and entering the unseen. His eyes are open, but you may pass within a yard of them and they will not seem to see you. They are fixed on the far distance, as if, over the Southern edge of the world, the man saw the Holy City towards which he bows, with its Kaaba and its black stone. He might be crystal-gazing, or watching the horizon for a sail at sea.



THE TEMPLE AREA AND THE MOUNT OF OLIVES FROM MOUNT ZION

To the left is the Mosque of Omar with three of the arcades leading to the platform of the Dome of the Rock; rising above the farthermost of these is the Golden Gate.

On the right-hand side of the picture the whole of the west side of the Mosque of El Aksa is seen, with the dome and roof covering the main body of the building.

Two long stretches of both the eastern and western boundary walls of the Temple Area are visible. The nearer (western) wall includes the space known as the "Wailing-place," situated just below the principal group of cypresses between the two Mosques. The upper, lighter portion of the wall is Turkish; the lower is the best preserved section of the ancient wall.

Just below the small portion of wall with semi-circular battlements, near the minaret by the Mosque of El Aksa, may be noticed the springing stones of "Robinson's Arch," the arch which spanned the Tyropœon Valley, and led from the Temple Area to Mount Zion. The minaret near the Mosque of Omar stands by the Chain Gate (Bab es Silseleh).

The range of hills rising above the Temple Area is the Mount of Olives. The two central summits of the range are shewn. That to the right bears the Russian buildings and the Church of the Lord's Prayer.





People may be dancing and singing by his side, but he does not see them nor hear. Bathing once in the waters of Elisha's fountain at Jericho we had a memorable instance of this. We found the pool empty and the walls undergoing repair. A lad who had charge of the place was persuaded in the usual fashion to let down the door of a sluice and so allow the pool to fill, greatly to the detriment of the newly mortared wall. When we had stripped, the owner of the place appeared, and we rose to the surface from a dive to hear a controversy going on, with violent gesture and apoplectic fury, which marks a high point in our register of vituperation. The water seemed on the whole to be the safest place, and we kept to it until suddenly we perceived that a great silence had fallen on the landscape. Looking anxiously to see what had happened, we found the owner on his knees, praying by his own spring. We dressed without delay, and had to pass in front of him to reach the tents, but he never seemed to know that we had passed.

The muezzin, or call to prayer from the minaret, is one of the most affecting of all Eastern sounds. Men are chosen for this office with singularly mellow and rich voices; they intone, with a very musical little cadence in a minor key, the first chapter of the Koran, and sometimes other prayers. At the great Mosque of Damascus, a solitary reciter calls from the slender minaret, and is answered from the balcony of the broader one across the court by twenty voices in unison. While the waves of rich sound float out over the city, and are caught and faintly echoed from

scores of other minarets, one remembers how that voice has rolled forth already over innumerable villages from Bengal westwards, and men have paused from their labour to pray according to their lights.

Islam is usually supposed to have been the "Ishmaelite in church history," with hand against every man from the first. Really, when it was Arabian, as it remained for four centuries, it was very tolerant, and the Christian pilgrims, priests, and monks were little disturbed. But in 1086 the Seljuk chiefs of wandering Turkish tribes came into possession, and the days of suspicion and that heavy cruelty which is characteristic of the stupid began. There were massacres of monks on Carmel and elsewhere then, and such a state of general tyranny and oppression that the cry reached the West, and the Crusades began. The Crusades, as they dragged their slow length along, did not tend to better understandings; and after Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem, we read that the walls and pavement of the Mosque of Omar had to be purified with copious showers of water distilled from the fragrant roses of Damascus. The relations between Moslem and Christian in the land to-day are happier, and the intercourse of increasing trade and travel is breaking down old partitions here as elsewhere. Yet little love is lost between the professors of the rival faiths even now. Dr. Andrew Thomson relates how, in recent years, "it had been observed that at a particular period of the day the shadow of the great Mosque of Omar fell upon a certain Christian burying-ground. Even the honour of



THE WEST SIDE OF THE TEMPLE AREA FROM THE BARRACKS NEAR THE SITE OF THE TOWER OF ANTONIA

The buildings immediately to the right, in the foreground, are part of the Old Serai. Above them rises Mount Zion with its two prominent synagogues. The rosy hills to the left are the mountains of Judea; farther left is the Mosque of El Aksa, below which we have the north-west corner of the Platform of the Dome of the Rock, with the foot of the stairs leading to the Arcade at that point. Morning light.





blessing conveyed by so sacred a shadow was grudged. The public authorities in Jerusalem were strongly urged to have the Christian cemetery removed to some more distant place, and it required all the combined influence of the European consulates to prevent a scandalous order to this effect from being issued." The Ordnance Survey party was on several occasions attacked, and even fired upon. In fanatical Moslem cities like Hebron and Nablus, travellers have to conduct themselves with the utmost discretion, and even then will probably be stoned with more or less effect according to the courage and the marksmanship of the thrower. The Christians return the animosity with a certain impatient ridicule, which seems to indicate a lack of refined piety on their part. Our camp-waiters were Christians, and they used to give us very freely their opinions on the theological differences between them and the Mohammedans. There would be a reverent if somewhat startling account of the Holy Trinity, and then, in scornful contrast: "Mohammedans only One,—and Mohammed all the rest!" The scorn is hardly to be wondered at when one remembers the intellectual level of the powers that be. This is forced upon one's notice by countless tales of the custom-house and censorship officials. A map of ancient Palestine was objected to because "there were no maps in those days!" An engineer, telegraphing about a pump, was arrested because the message read: "One hundred revolutions!" In certain Bibles the text was erased, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners";

and it was directed that the word "Christians" should be substituted, as there were no sinners in the Turkish empire! After a certain amount of that regime, one would no doubt put new meaning into the prayer which invokes God's mercy "upon all Turks," as well as on infidels and heretics!

In spite of all this there is a good deal of interchange between the two faiths, or at least of borrowing on the part of Islam from Christian tradition. So many points have the two in common, that a theory has been broached on which Mohammed appears only as the Judaiser (as it were) of later days, who saw the difficulty that Christians had in working with general principles, and set himself to simplify the situation by reducing Christianity to a stereotyped system. Carlyle distinctly calls Islam "a kind of Christianity." However this may be, there is no question as to the immense amount which Syrian Mohammedanism borrows from the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. Countless tombs and other monuments are dedicated to Joshua and other Old Testament worthies. This, of course, may be due to the fact that many Moslem saints have borne the old names, and as time went on their memories came to be confused with those of their more famous namesakes. Samson's exploits especially have appealed to the Mohammedan imagination, and he appears under the *incognito* of "Ismân Aly," among many other names. St. George is a very popular saint for Moslem worship. It startles us still more to find that in the great fire at Damascus numbers of Moslems threw them-



INTERIOR OF MOSQUE AT SAMARIA

This Mosque, which is situated within the area of the Crusaders' Church of St. John the Baptist, is partly constructed of the materials of the ancient Church.

The recess in the wall, to the left of the pulpit, is the *Mihrab* indicating the direction of Mecca.





selves into the flames in the attempt to rescue the head of John the Baptist; while a copy of the Koran—one of the original four copies—which lay below the relic, was forgotten and destroyed.

The most extensive and curious point of contact between the two religions is found in those mosques which were formerly built as Christian churches, and then appropriated by the conquerors. The Grand Mosque of Damascus is a conspicuous case in point. It is built on the site of a pagan temple, part of whose hoary front still stands, a magnificent fragment of ancient heavy masonry and carving now brown and grey with age. On the ruins of the temple rose the Christian church of St. John the Baptist, whose date is about the beginning of the fifth century. After the Mohammedan conquest the church became a mosque, and fabulous sums were spent on its decoration. It has twice been destroyed by fire, and is now being restored after the last of these destructions.[1] The restoration has a very brand-new appearance, yet it is magnificent with its wealth of marble and of other costly stone. The Mosque of Samaria, conspicuous from a distance by its minaret, is another Christian church reconstructed for Mohammedan worship. There was a sixth-century basilica here, but the present mosque is built out of the material of the Crusader church which replaced that. The severity and bareness of its stone walls and pillars are relieved only by one touch of colour—the flags and the lovely green pillars of the pulpit. The wall at the pulpit's side has been recessed into a

[1] Written in 1904.

mihrab or niche, which points towards Mecca and so gives the worshipper his bearings. In the crypt, where the Crusaders believed they had the tomb of John the Baptist, large slabs of polished marble attest the former wealth of decoration, and these slabs are of peculiar interest because of one curious little fact. It was customary to carve on Christian buildings the sign of the Cross—a Maltese cross, set within a circle. Such a cross may be distinctly seen on one of the stones close to the embedded pillar at the south door of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. On the marble slabs of the crypt in Samaria these encircled crosses are to be seen ; but the Mohammedans have chipped away the uprights of them, leaving only the meaningless horizontal bar bisecting the circle, and the obvious mark of the chisel in their rough workmanship leaves the uprights also faintly visible. Perhaps the most interesting case of all is the Mosque el Aksa, close to the Mosque of Omar, within the temple area. This is that "far-off place of prayer" which Mohammed counted among the most holy shrines in the world. Founded by Justinian as a Christian basilica, it was converted into a mosque by Omar, and adorned with unheard-of lavishness by Abd el Melik, who overlaid its doors with gold and silver plates. Since then it has passed through many adventures. Widened to efface some suggestion of cruciform shape, its breadth became unmanageable, and six rows of pillars support the roof. The roof has fallen in, and earthquakes have broken the building more than once, so that most of the masonry is com-



ENTRANCE TO THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

This is a double doorway in the Southern Façade of the Church, and dates probably from the second half of the twelfth century.

The richly carved lintels over the doorways are of distinctly French work, though there is much of Oriental character in the rest of the design.

The columns of various coloured marbles are antique. The steep steps to the right are those of the Chapel of the Agony, in the wall of which is embedded an ancient monolithic column and podium of pink crystalline limestone from the mountains of Moab. Facing the spectator is the Apse of the Chapel of the Forty Martyrs. The figure in the foreground is a Greek priest.





paratively modern, the great arches of the structure which supports the dome being "anchored" by wooden beams which throw horizontal bridges from capital to capital in Arab fashion. The green-and-gold mosaic with which the interior of the dome and the upper portion of the adjacent masonry is covered, cannot be very old, though their dim and antique beauty is worthy of the older art. The pulpit, richly inlaid with Aleppo work of ivory and mother-of-pearl, was Saladin's gift seven hundred years ago. But that which most of all attracts the eye and fascinates the imagination is certain of the pillars, whose varigated colours are peculiarly rich and harmonious. Up to a certain height they are polished to the shining point by the garments of worshippers rubbing against them as they pass; above that they are smooth, unpolished stone. The capitals, and some at least of the columns, are very ancient, and may have stood in the original basilica.

The Mosque of Omar is not, strictly speaking, a mosque at all. The mosque is El Aksa, and the more famous building is but a glorified praying-station of the nature of a weli in its court. It stands near the centre of a wide open space, practically the only such space in Jerusalem, which occupies one-sixth part of the whole area of the city within the walls. The enclosure is partly artificial, supported on vast substructures of vaulted building which raise the enclosed ground to a general level. The mosque is set up on a platform ten feet higher than this level. The enclosure is an irregular parallelogram about 500 yards in length

It is unpaved, and not even levelled with any exactness. The raised platform in the midst of it measures about 180 yards on three sides, while the fourth, that next the Mosque el Aksa, is 50 yards shorter, giving to the whole platform a mistaken and out-of-drawing look. This platform is paved with slabs of stone, which in the main preserve a level surface, but in detail bear a sinister resemblance to an old-fashioned graveyard. In the whole enclosure there are but two large buildings—El Aksa against the southern wall and the Mosque of Omar in the middle. Many smaller structures are scattered about the space at irregular intervals. The largest and finest of these is the Dome of the Chain, a very beautiful little building with angled circumference and dome like its great neighbour, beside which it appears as a kind of satellite. It differs from the "mosque" in that it has no sides, but is merely a roof upon pillars. These are arranged in two concentric circles, both the inner and the outer arches being cut across by horizontal tie-beams like those of El Aksa. The floor is of inlaid marble, and the superstructure is covered within and without with Persian tiles. The other small erections are for the most part mihrabs, or praying-places, turned towards Mecca. But the platform is surrounded at intervals by those small arcades, or detached rows of arches on slender pillars, which stand at the upper end of the various flights of steps by which you descend from its pavement to the lower area. There is a singular lightness and pleasantness about these



INTERIOR OF THE DOME OF THE CHAIN LOOKING NORTH

This is an eleven-sided building, entirely supported on antique marble columns, and open all round except on one side, which contains a *Mihrab*. An inner ring of six columns sustains a central dome. Resting on the columns are wooden beams tying the columns together and supporting the arches above, as in the Mosque of El Aksa. The whole of the superstructure, within and without, except the ceiling between the two rings of columns, is encrusted with Persian tiles. To the left is the east porch of the Mosque of Omar. The floor is inlaid marble.

Through the columns to the north appear the two arcades above the steps descending to the lower level of the Temple Area. The minaret is near the site of the Tower of Antonia. Mid-day light.





"Balances" (as they are called) which delight the eye with a very dainty foreground for every view of the city or the mountains beyond it. On the spot, there is the same unfinished and untidy aspect to which one becomes so soon accustomed in the East. The bulging pavement of the upper platform is all the more uncouth because of the two trim buildings whose finish stands out in such contrast from its unevenness. The lower area is, as has been said, hardly even levelled. Shapeless mounds and hollows break up its whole surface. Sordid habitations of the ministers of the mosque seem to burrow at the edge of the platform and even under the steps of the "Balances," while grass grows unheeded among the irregular clusters of cypress trees. Yet that very irregularity lends to the enclosure a refreshing charm when seen from the distance of the Mount of Olives. From that point of view the great domes and the white minaret on the north wall stand out from the reddish-brown earth—great things, surrounded and accompanied by little things, each of which appears exquisite in neatness; while the cypress groves preserve the cool sense of open air and shade which is so characteristic of the whole scene. It is fantastic scenery, but the fantasy is, it must be confessed, uncommonly beautiful, and somehow gives the impression of gem-work wrought with great jewels.

The Mosque of Omar itself is a sharply-edged domed octagon, some 500 feet or more in circumference. A high dado of panelled white marble runs round the base, above which the sides present faces of

the most wonderfully-coloured tile-work in the world. A band of blue runs an inscription round the building near the frieze, but the great spaces between frieze and dado have the general effect of a pale, yellowish green. Above the octagon, the drum of the dome stands out in brighter shades of the same colours, and the dome itself, oxidised till it has taken on a metallic sheen, answering brilliantly to all lights, rises to the gilded crescent a hundred feet from the ground.

The interior of the octagon is in three concentric rings, divided by two circles of pillars. The shafts of these pillars are of marble, and the variety and beauty of their colours are very wonderful. They vary in height as well as colour, and also in architectural style. The explanation of such extraordinary variety is that this is another of those places on which the ends of the world are come. The columns have been brought hither from older buildings,—some, it is said, from Hadrian's Temple of Jupiter ; many from old Christian churches. Those which come short are supplemented with blocks of stone to the required height. One column is actually built in upside down. Yet all this only seems to enhance the solemn and mysterious beauty of that interior. All that was said on p. 18 about the effect of coloured glass, and the magnificence of carpets and mosaics, reaches its height under that marvellous dome.

Its history has been a strange one. Behind the time of its erection lies all the story of the Temple,



INTERIOR OF THE DOME OF THE ROCK (MOSQUE OF OMAR) FROM THE SOUTH-EAST

Immediately to the left is one of the eight piers, dividing the inner from the outer octagonal aisles, overlaid with marble. The jasper column in the centre is one of two antique columns supporting the three arches between the piers. To the right of the jasper column is seen one of the four marble-covered piers sustaining the drum of the dome. Between these latter piers are three antique columns of precious marble supporting four pointed arches having voussoirs of alternate white and black marble. One such column is seen to the right and three to the left of the pier. The upper part of the pier, the spandrel between the arches, and the wall space above up to the ceiling of the aisle, are encrusted with green and gold mosaic of early date (probably twelfth century) and floriated design. The ceiling (eighteenth century) is richly painted and gilded, with ornament of a geometrical pattern, chiefly red and blue in colour. The Sacred Rock, in the centre of the Mosque, on which the Jewish Altar of Burnt Sacrifice probably stood, and where the Christian Altar was placed by the Crusaders, is concealed by the lofty painted iron screen, which dates from Crusading times.

The pointed arch facing the spectator leads to the cavern under the Sacred Rock. To the left is the *Dikkeh*, or raised platform from which the Koran is read on Friday. The floor of the Mosque is covered with matting.





whose sacred ark Jewish tradition affirms to have been concealed here by Jeremiah. But that rock, whose red outcrop breaks through the floor of the mosque, leads us back to a dimmer past, and to the story of Abraham's sacrifice upon Moriah, whose site this is said to be. Various theories have been advocated as to the place which the rock held in the arrangements of the Jewish temple. The Jews of to-day have a legend that on it somewhere the Unspeakable Name is written, and they explain the miracles of Jesus by the supposition that He had succeeded in deciphering it. We, too, for whom its chief interest and pathos lie in the fact that Christ came hither to worship, and in the things that befell Him here, may accept the meaning at least of that curious legend. For His own words were that He had declared to men the name of His Father, and that declaration has truly revealed to mankind the hidden meaning of their holiest things.

It was in 680 A.D. that the first Mohammedan sanctuary was erected on the temple area, but the date of the present building is two hundred years later. It struck us as a curious fact a year ago in Damascus that the burnt mosque was being rebuilt almost entirely by Christian masons. Still more surprising is it to learn that the Mosque of Omar was built by Byzantine architects and modelled on the Rotunda of the Holy Sepulchre. Two hundred years later the Crusaders entered Jerusalem, and, according to the dreadful story, "the carnage in the Mosque of Omar swept away the

bodies of thousands in a deluge of human blood."[1] Mistaking the Mosque for the veritable Temple of Solomon, they founded there the Society of the Knights Templars, on whose armorial bearings the dome appears. They converted the building into "Templum Domini," and planted a large gilded cross upon the summit of it. Traces of their invasion still remain in the cutting of the rock to suit their altar, and in the great wrought-iron enclosing screen. For almost a century the Templum Domini remained in Christian hands, until 1187, when Saladin conquered Jerusalem. His generosity and gentleness contrasted strangely with the "loathsome triumph" of the Crusaders; but the first destination of the triumphal march was the mosque, from whose dome the Cross was hurled to the ground, and for two days dragged about the streets. From that time the mosque has been one of the most exclusive places in the world. Till recent years no Christian was permitted to enter it, and Jews avoid it, lest they should unwittingly tread upon the ground of the ancient Holy of Holies.

The first impressions of the Mosque of Omar are very pleasing. There is a barbaric splendour in its rich colouring and metallic glitter when seen from a short distance, while the more distant view of it is one of rare soft beauty. Its wide courts, too, give it a fresh and open-air character which is very refreshing after the stifling dark heat and closeness of the Holy Sepulchre. Above all it impresses one with its grand simplicity.

[1] *The Crusades*, Cox, p. 72.



THE DOME OF THE ROCK (MOSQUE OF OMAR) WITH THE DOME OF THE CHAIN (KUBBET ES SILSELEH) IN THE FOREGROUND

The point of view is from the arcade at the head of the flight of steps leading down from the eastern side of the Upper Platform of the Temple Area. The eastern face of the great Mosque, which is octagonal in plan, is directly opposite the spectator. To the right and left are the ends of the north and south porches. The doorway of the eastern porch is visible between the columns of the Dome of the Chain, which is in many respects a reproduction in miniature of the Dome of the Rock. The sides of the great Mosque consist of three parts: (1) The parapet covered with Persian tiles, having in the centre an inscription in Arabic on a dark-blue ground with borders of yellow and green; (2) The blind arcade, covered, like the parapet, with many-coloured tiles, and consisting of seven low pointed arches, five of them pierced with windows; (3) A high dado of panelled white marble.

The drum of the Dome is encrusted with Persian tiles and has square-headed windows at intervals, shewing bright yellow and green in the picture. The Dome, said to be contemporary with the rest of the structure, but more probably renewed in the twelfth century, is of wood covered with lead; the present colour of the exterior is due to the oxidisation caused by time. The height, to the summit of the finial, is over a hundred feet.

In the left-hand corner of the picture is a portion of the arcade leading down to the lower level of the Temple Area in the direction of the Mosque el Aksa. The flat green dome to the right of it, above, is the large synagogue on Mount Zion. Morning light.





The sharp-edge angles of the octagon are taken in at a glance ; the rock within is bare rock, and infinitely more impressive than the silk and marble in which rock masquerades at Bethlehem. The great number of its pillars, screens, reading-stands, and other furniture, leaves little open room, and it feels rather a crowded than a spacious place for worship. Yet, on the other hand, you are not wearied with the complex symbolism of many of the ancient churches. The meaning of this may be poorer, but at least it is plain. This means just a perfectly shapely and highly coloured octagon, where men have worshipped God for a thousand years in the least complicated way in which worship has been done. Thus the mosque is typical of the faith and the policy that created it. "I do not believe," says Disraeli's *Tancred*, "that anything great is ever effected by management. . . . You require something more vigorous and more simple. . . . You must act like Moses and Mohammed."

On the other hand, the enthusiasm for Mohammedan simplicity is sorely tried when the first moment of almost awestruck feeling ends with the advance of the guide. He is to shew you the wonders of the mosque, and the torrent of mingled absurdity and superstition by which you find yourself swept on is very trying to the would-be admirer of the faith and its monument. First of all, there are the relics — the footprint of Mohammed, and the hairs of his beard ; the praying-places of Abraham and Elijah and other "very fine, high-class people," as our dragoman described

them to us; the round hole where the rock let Mohammed through when he ascended to heaven, the hollow place in the roof of the cavern where it rose to let him stand erect to pray, the tongue with which it spoke, and the mark of the angel Gabriel's finger when it had to be held down from following him in his ascension. Still more disenchanting is the knot of underground superstitions that desecrate the holy place, and rob it of its freshness and healthy simplicity, like snakes in the garden. The wild imagination of the East has pictured to itself the regions which lie underneath this sanctuary in its own grim way. In spite of a very obvious pillar, and a bit of white-washed wall to be seen in the cavern, the rock is supposed to hover unsupported over the abyss. Beneath is "the well of souls," where the dead assemble twice weekly to pray. Some think of these departed ones as those who wait for the Resurrection, but a darker fancy holds that the gates of hell are here. The worshipper feels the souls of the dead flitting about him, and prays with the cries of the lost in his ears. Even the open spaces of the court are haunted by unclean legends, and seem to be heavy with the odour of graveyard mould. Here, at St. George's dome, with the two red granite pillars in front of it, is the place where Solomon tormented the demons; there, by the eastern wall, is the throne whereon he sat when dead, the corpse leaning on his staff to cheat them, until worms gnawed the staff through, the body fell forward, and the demons found out the trick.



THE SUMMER PULPIT FROM THE SOUTH PORCH OF THE MOSQUE OF OMAR (DOME OF THE ROCK)

The Pulpit adjoins one of the arcades at the head of the steps leading down from the platform of the Dome of the Rock to the lower Temple Area. Through the arcade is seen the central arch of the south porch of El Aksa, over which rises the dome of that Mosque.

The small elegant detached structure is a *Mihrab*, pointing the direction towards Mecca.





In common decency, any place that lays claim to sacredness must have something to say to worshippers regarding conduct ; but the ethics of the Mosque of Omar are a match for its impostures, alike in gruesomeness and in impudence. They are all of the nature of magic tests, by which souls are to be tried for their eternal fate. The little arcades at the top of the steps of the platform are called " Balances " because the scales of judgment are to be suspended there on the Great Day. The Dome of the Chain owes its name to the circumstance that there a golden chain hung at David's place of judgment, which had to be grasped by witnesses and dropped a link when a lie was told. A place in the outer wall is shown from which a wire will be suspended on the Day of Judgment, whose other end will be made fast on the Mount of Olives. Christ will sit on the wall and Mohammed on the mount. Over this wire must all men find their way, but only the good will cross, the wicked falling into the valley beneath. In the El Aksa Mosque a couple of pillars stand very near each other, so worn that they are perceptibly thinned. The space between them bulges, in which a piece of spiked iron-work is now inserted. These were another test for the final award—he who could squeeze himself through the aperture, and he alone, had found the true " narrow way " to heaven.

Frauds such as these force upon every visitor the question how far the Mohammedans themselves believe them. The utter want of earnestness, or anything that to a Western mind bears the resemblance of reality, is

painfully evident in the attendants who guide you through the mosque. You are forced to respect its sacredness by purchasing the loan of slippers to cover your boots, and you feel rather like one entering a circus than a place of worship, when you have been transformed into an illuminated caricature by means of one yellow and another red slipper. Your guide, who wears the appearance of a convict in clericals, greatly enjoys your picturesqueness, and makes haste to conduct you to a certain jasper slab into which Mohammed drove nineteen nails of gold (which look, however, indistinguishable from iron). A nail comes out at the end of every epoch, and when all are gone the end of the world will come. One day the devil destroyed all but three and a half of them, when the Angel Gabriel, caught napping for once, stopped the mischief just in time. Here you are invited to lay any coins you may chance to have about you, and assured that if the coin be silver you will save your soul by giving it. As the coins are tabled, the whole body of assistant clergy assembles to count the collection.

All this, and much else, is but the inevitable outcome of a worship that gathers round a stone. It is a petrified worship, hard and dead as its sacred rock. Nothing could be more pathetic than a window in El Aksa almost darkened with little rags of clothing hung there by poor folk who come to pray for their sick friends. If Syrian Christianity is corrupt, it is at least not so pitiless as Syrian Mohammedanism. The very aspect and situation of the rival shrines is symbolic.



THE HOLY ROCK BENEATH THE DOME OF THE MOSQUE OF OMAR

The Rock, the upper level of which is about 6½ feet above the floor of the Mosque, is the probable site of the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, and subsequently the Great Altar of Burnt Offerings in the Jewish Temple. In Christian times the Altar of the Crusaders stood on the upper level to the left (east). The scarped rock in front shews the dowel holes for the pins which attached to the rock the marble facing fixed there by the Crusaders.

Immediately surrounding the Rock is an enriched wooden pale, with panels of pierced work painted and gilded.

The small domed tower, painted and gilded, standing at the south-west corner within the pale, encloses a depression in the rock called the Footprint of Mohammed.

Coming now to the arcade which supports the drum and dome, we see two of the piers with the three antique marble columns between them. Above the level of the crowns of the arches runs an enriched frieze of marble, with a gilded scrolled pattern on a black ground. The cornice and the drum of the dome are covered with mosaics in green and gold, dating apparently from the time of Saladin.

The close iron screen between the columns was erected by the Crusaders.

The Gothic arch near the pier to the left spans the doorway leading down to the cave below the Holy Rock. Behind the columns of the arcade are seen the piers and columns of the outer aisle with arches resting on tie-beams as in the Mosque of El Aksa.

The floor of rich *Opus Alexandrinum* is usually covered with matting.

The piers and spandrels are faced with rich marbles.





The mosque does not really love men, whether it really believes in God or not. It sits apart in its wide enclosure, while the Church of the Sepulchre is huddled indistinguishably into the thickest pressure of the life of men and women in the city. The church seems, by its rugged and broken outline, to sympathise with the shattered fortunes of the life around it ; it is grey and ruinous-looking, as if it had borne man's sorrows and carried them. The mosque, with all its beauty, seems to sit there like some great sleek sphinx, watching everything, but sharing little and loving none of the misery around it. In this city of ruins there is something repellent about its smooth and self-complacent finish. No, the mosque does not really love men ; whether it really believes in itself and its miracles or not is another of the many Mohammedan things which God only knows.

CHAPTER V

CRUSADER

To tell even in barest outline the long story of the Crusades would be a task as impossible as it would be thankless. The magic of Sir Walter Scott's *Talisman* is happily not yet dead, and in some degree the Crusader still lives as an actual and human figure in our imagination. Many Christians who had come as pilgrims had settled in the land as its inhabitants, and for four centuries after the Arabian conquest these continued both their trade and their worship under the tolerably mild Mohammedan rule. In the eleventh century all was changed by the Saracen invasion. Pilgrims were extortionately taxed at the gates of Jerusalem ; their lives were imperilled, their persons and their devotions insulted. The old commerce, which had grown to considerable proportions, was ruined, and pilgrimage, from being a lucrative and pleasant service, became an almost certain martyrdom.

It was this state of affairs which sent Peter the Hermit through Europe on his great campaign in 1093, and those extraordinary wars that raged in Syria

through two centuries bore the complex character of the motives which had prompted them. From the departure of that motley rabble which followed the Hermit to the East in the first Crusade, down to the pitiful expedition of French children who started 30,000 strong from Vendôme in 1212, there stretches perhaps the most picturesque period in all history.[1]

The mass of paradox and contradiction which that period presents is no less striking. It was an invasion by the West, whose purpose was to rehabilitate an Eastern faith. It was a religious war carried on by the jealousies and ambitions of rival nations. It was the occasion of some of the most statesmanlike government that the world has seen, and it was accompanied from first to last by frequent outbursts of treachery, massacre, and lust. It was the most airy dream and at the same time the most effective practical force of its time. It was the expression of the most ascetic severity and the most reckless luxury. Utterly futile, commercially and socially disastrous, often wholly irreligious, it was yet everywhere a massive and purposeful conception, in which the determination and forcefulness of the West thrust their iron wedge clean to the centre of this sleepy land. Its high idealism, curiously alloyed with grosser elements both sensual and brutal, was yet able

[1] *The Crusades*, Cox, p. 215. Of these children only 5000 crossed the Mediterranean. They were sold, when they landed, in the slave-markets of Alexandria and Algiers.

to preserve through all the genuine spiritual fire of chivalry and of faith.

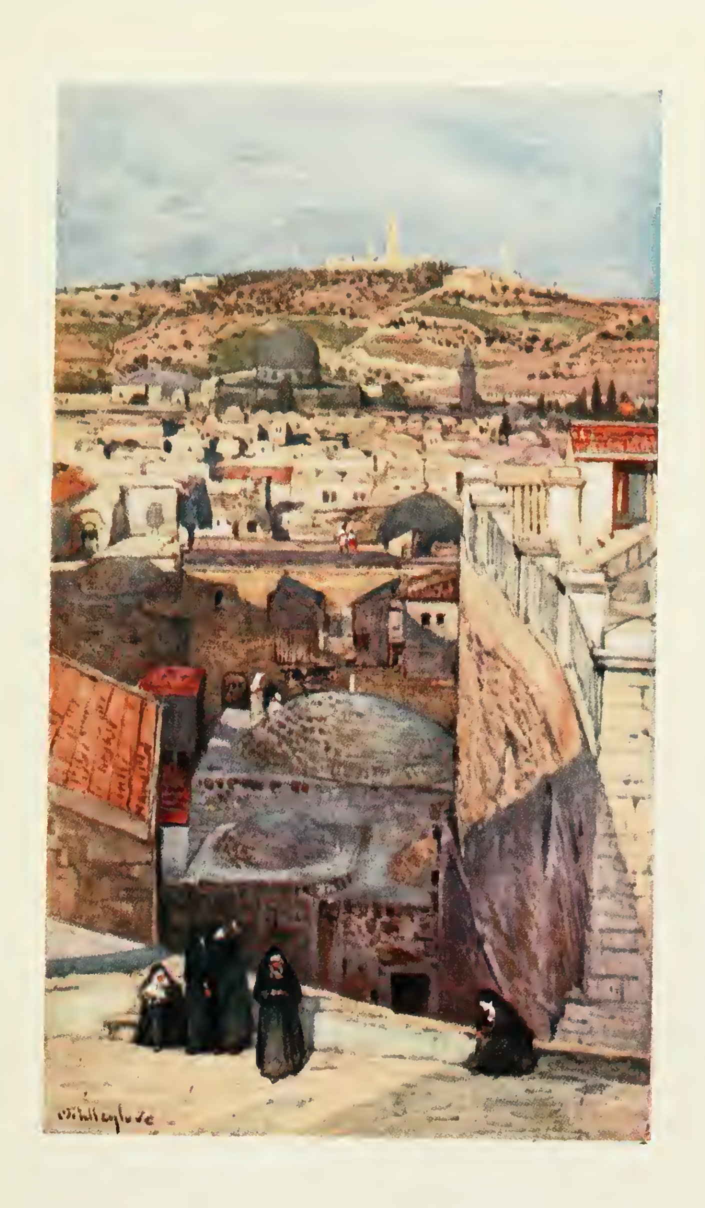
Our task is simply to ascertain what all this stands for in the history of Palestine, and what it has left behind it there as its memorial. In two words, it stands for the contact of the East and West, and for their separateness. Into Europe the Crusades brought much from the East. It was due to them more than to all other causes that there was so immense an increase of Eastern merchandise in Western markets—not of Jerusalem relics only, but of Damascus ware and of Persian and even Indian produce from beyond the great rivers. Their influence on architecture, too, is a well-known fact of Western history. The Mosque of Omar rose on at least three European sites, and the plan of many another piece of Byzantine building and Arabesque decoration was brought home by the Crusaders from the wars. Into the East, again, the Crusades brought much from the West. From north to south of Palestine one meets with the remains and memorials of that invasion. Theirs are the footprints most visible throughout the land. Everything in Syria has felt the touch of them and retained its mark. At every turn one finds something recognisable and homely to Western ears and eyes—the name of a castle, the chiselling of a stone, the moulding of metal—they are strangely familiar as they are met so far away from home. Yet they survive as wreckage, and as wreckage only. He who hopes to westernise the East is attempting a task in which all must fail, whether they be soldiers or priests, missionaries or statesmen.



THE MOUNT OF OLIVES FROM A HOUSE-TOP ON MOUNT ZION

The hill in the distance is the Mount of Olives, surmounted by the lofty "Russian Buildings." The hill is bounded below by the East Wall of the Temple Area, the Golden Gate shewing to the left. In the middle distance is the Dome of the Rock. The cypresses to the right are those between the Mosques of Omar and El Aksa.

Behind the larger of the two saucer domes in the foreground lies the Pool of Hezekiah ; a little higher to the left are the remains of the Muristan. The foreground is the roof of one of the houses of the Sisters of Zion. Time, just before sunset.





The ancient Eastern life has long ago flowed back over the relics of the Western occupation of Syria.

The surviving traces are of many kinds. There are the descendants of Crusaders, sprung of intermarriages with Eastern women, and still preserving a distinctively European type in little suggestive details of feature or of hair. Names such as Belfort, Belvoir, Mirabel, Blanchegarde, or Sinjil (St. Giles), coming without apology next to the Hebrew and Arabic names of villages in Palestine, strike one with very much the same shock as old Scottish place-names do, alternating with incorporated aboriginal ones, on the railway stations of the Australian bush. Relics like the sword and spurs of Godfrey de Bouillon may, like most other relics, be discounted, but not so the wonderful masonry of castles and of churches which everywhere overawes the man accustomed to modern walls. Winding our way with tight rein along the narrow and crooked streets of Tyre, we suddenly plunged into the darkness and foul air of the Bazaar. At the other end of it, emerging under a Gothic archway, we found ourselves in the courtyard of a khan, a very dirty and unpleasant place. Seeing nothing but unclean stables, we imagined that our horses were to be put up here and perhaps fed, and we pitied them. Then, to our astonishment, we discovered that this was the old Crusader Church, where these broken and discoloured arches had once echoed the hymns and prayers of European chivalry ; and that somewhere among them lay the bones of the great emperor so famous in

history and legend—"Der alte Barbarossa, der Kaiser Friederich." Not less affecting in its way was the discovery of a little patch of snapdragon flowers on the ruined walls of Belfort Castle. We were informed that the plant is not elsewhere found in Syria, and the likelihood is that some Crusader's lady brought it from the garden of a far-off French or English home.

The Crusader was at once the dreamer, the worshipper, and the fighter of the Middle Age. The knight was not indeed the sort of man whom at first sight we would suspect of dreaming. Could we see him riding down the street to-day, we should probably be reminded of some village blacksmith on a Clydesdale horse. Yet he had been dreaming dreams and seeing visions. He was a gentleman and a man of feeling, though he had his own rough ways of shewing it. Part of what had set him dreaming was the instinct of travel and the literature of travel which in those days was so quaint and picturesque. No doubt this travel literature was largely due to pilgrims, but there were others then who could play no tune but "Over the hills and far away." Travellers' half-remembered and exaggerated adventures conspired with the fantastic imaginings of the untravelled rustic to create that magic land beyond the horizon where giants, monsters, and devils had their home. All the wistfulness, the dream, and the desire of the ancient days are there. The chroniclers of the time before the Norman Conquest are the most fascinating of geographers, and the singers of Arthurian romance in the later days of the

Crusades arrived at a geography which was an utter bewilderment, the result of ages of vague travel and rumours from the Syrian seat of war. Babylon and Wales and places with names wholly unpronounceable are in sublime confusion, and the geography in general is that of Thackeray's Little Billee, who saw from his mast-head "Jerusalem and Madagascar and South Amerikee."

Jerusalem always came first. "The Crusades," as Sidonia says in *Tancred*, "renovated the spiritual hold which Asia has always had upon the North." The spell of the East had come upon the West, and in that there lay a reason for the Crusades deeper than any commercial or even military attraction. The West was waiting for it. Behind the British men of the twelfth century lay a heredity of patriotic legend connected largely with the battle of Christianity against Paganism under Arthur. There lay the foundation of much that was best in the crusading enthusiasm. On their own soil they had followed the King and fought under him for Christ. But to satisfy the hearts of these rough men it needed more than all such practical life could yield them, even when that life was so exciting as it was then. There is an infinite pathos in the dream that was coming to clearness through those years. Discontented with the glories even of Arthur's court, longing for a spiritual something which might give to chivalry its finest meaning, they sought the Holy Grail. Until, well on in the twelfth century, the shadowy figures of Walter Map and Robert de Borron

formulate the romance,[1] we see it growing out of old pagan legends baptized by Christian missionaries and blended with Bible stories. It emerges at last in the romances of the French Trouvères, the summit and flower of all past idealisms, the spiritual secret and gist of life, and the chief end of noble men. This is all well known to those who interest themselves in that spiritual search which is the main business of choice souls in all ages, and which in that age took literary form in the Grail Quest. But to us it is specially interesting to note that the century whose later years received the Trouvère legend from Chrétien de Troyes began with an event but for which that legend would never have assumed the form in which it appeared. In 1101 Cæsarea was besieged and taken by Baldwin I. "It yielded a rich booty. Among other prizes was found a hexagonal vase of green crystal, supposed to have been used at the administration of the sacrament, and now preserved in Paris. This vase plays an important part in mediæval poetry as the Holy Grail." The visionary aspect of the Crusades is that which continually obtrudes itself as one reads their history. Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* is full of it. Even so rough and boisterous a hero as Richard is obviously a dreamer also. Nothing in all this history is more striking than that fateful day when, after marching to within seven leagues of Jerusalem, Richard commanded his army to halt, and courted their murmurs during a

[1] Map has the credit of introducing the Grail story into Arthurian romance; Borron of adding the early part which traced it to Joseph of Arimathea.

month's unaccountable inaction. Performing unheard-of feats of valour in minor sallies, he could only weep when he beheld the towers of the Holy City, and after routing Saladin's army in a great battle at Joppa, negotiated a truce and wandered off to shipwreck and imprisonment, commending the Holy Land to God, and praying that it might be granted him to return again and recover it.[1]

As worshippers, the Crusaders are famous figures in the Holy Land. It is hard to reconcile the tales of wild debauchery which followed almost all their victories, with the obviously genuine religious enthusiasm that swept the hosts down weeping on their knees when they caught first sight of Jerusalem. Yet the worship was sincere, and there were pure and gentle spirits among them whom victory did not demoralise. They are always, indeed, armed worshippers—at first a religious soldiery, afterwards a military priesthood, as Stebbing puts it. This composite character is well brought out in the two orders of knights, the Hospitallers and the Templars. The former, working for the sick in the Holy City, wore a black robe with a white cross upon the breast of it, but when there was fighting to be done they covered this with a surcoat of scarlet on which a silver cross was embroidered. They lived simply, contenting themselves with such lodging and fare as were offered them, and they were bound to keep themselves provided with a light which must always be kept burning while they slept. The Templars

[1] Cf. *Chivalry and Crusades*, Stebbing, vol. ii. chaps. iv. and v.

pledged themselves in even stricter vows, and were warrior-priests in the most literal sense of the term. On the summit of Mount Tabor there is the ruin of a Crusader church, whose broken walls still enclose the sacred space where once men worshipped. Spacious and strongly built, the ruin has a severe grandeur of its own. In the chancel an altar has been rebuilt, and an upturned Corinthian capital set upon it, in the centre of which is fixed a heavy iron cross. That iron cross seems to sum up in its grave symbolism the very spirit of the Crusades. Many of their churches were reconstructions of older Christian edifices, and most of them have been transmuted into mosques, so that their ecclesiastical architecture still remaining is as composite as their character and their enterprise. Yet enough remains of what is distinctively their own to show at once the massive strength and the decorative beauty of their buildings. Its strength is that of men who were accustomed to build fortresses; the buttressed walls are of immense thickness, and the mortar is sometimes harder than the stone. Its beauty has been defaced by the mutilation of much fine work, but from what is left we know how well they carved; and there is a certain high solemnity about their arches and columns which tells of men whose minds were large, strong, and real.

One curious fact, to which Conder often directs attention, is constantly perplexing the traveller. Their identifications of sacred sites are those of men whose enthusiasm far exceeded their knowledge. Had they



THE MOSQUE OF EL AKSA FROM INSIDE THE SOUTH WALL OF JERUSALEM

The cypresses to the left are those of the Temple Area. The roof of the main body of the Mosque extends from them to the dome at the south end of the building. The range of hills in the distance is the Mount of Olives, terminating on the right with the Russian buildings and campanile.





taken time to consult the Scriptures, or to read them with any thoughtfulness, countless errors would have been avoided. But the soldier instinct is very far from the critical, and they were impatient to find the sites they wished to see. Anything was sufficient for a clue. The name Jibrin suggested "Gabriel," and a great church arose in honour of the Archangel. Athlit was near the sea-shore, and the Crusaders who lived there found Tyre and Capernaum in its immediate neighbourhood. For reasons equally cogent, Shiloh was brought within a mile or two of Jerusalem, Shechem became Sychar, and the heights of Ebal and Gerizim were recognised as the Dan and Bethel of Jeroboam's calves. Most curious of all, the little hill of Jebel Duhy, on whose summit you look down across the valley from the top of Tabor, was named Hermon, for no other reason than that a psalm places the two together in its promise that "Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Thy name." Altogether, these worshippers were in too great haste. "Crusading topography is more remarkable than reliable."

Great as the Crusaders were in dream and in worship, it is their fighting that remains for ever most impressive and most characteristic. Of no men in history is the verse truer, in spite of all their extravagances—

> Know that the men of great renown
>   Were men of simple needs :
> Bare to the Lord they laid them down
>   And slept on mighty deeds.

Looked at from a distance, the Crusades very generally wear the aspect of a stream of brilliant colour—a

spectacular progress of Europe through a corner of Asia, whose main feature is its brilliant picturesqueness. On the spot the quality in them which is by far the most impressive is their stern reality and fighting weight. The Crusader was doubtless one who in his time played many parts, but whatever else he was, no one who has seen the remains of his work will question that he was at least "a first-class fighting man." The figure of Richard, as it is preserved for us in the records of the older historians, may be more or less apocryphal, but it is at least true enough to crusading ideals, which must have found many an actual realisation in these strong and fearless soldiers of the Cross. We read of amazing captures of booty; of single combats in which "the King at one blow severs the head, right shoulder and arm of his opponent from the rest of his body"; of a conflict in which only one Christian perished, while "the Turks lost seven hundred men and above fifteen hundred horses." At Joppa the king leaps out of his ship before it can reach land, and rushes on the enemy. Three days later he and his knights are surprised and have to fight half-naked, some in their shirts and some even barefoot; yet they win. At another time we see Richard plunging alone into the midst of the hostile army, and fighting until Saladin's brother sends him a gift of two Arab war-horses to enable him to fight it out. Altogether such a hero was he, that the Moslems asserted "that even the horses bristled their manes at the name of Richard." No wonder if in the popular imagination he became for England hardly distinguishable from that

St. George who had already been identified with Perseus, who on these same sands had fought the dragon for Andromeda.

The grandeur of crusading warfare lingers in the mighty ruins of their castles. Nothing could surpass the impressiveness of these castles, seen on hill-tops from below, combing the sky with the sharp broken teeth of their ruined towers, or rearing a black "mailed head of menace" against the stars. Many of them are on the sites of older fortresses, and actually stand on Jewish or Roman foundations. By far the most imposing of such castles is that of Banias, which crowns that spur of Hermon at which "Dan leaped from Bashan" long ago. We approached it through the groves on its northern side, and camped for a while close beside an immense cistern now dry, and utilised for the cultivation of tobacco. The mighty round tower of the north-east extremity rises narrowing upward from its base like some colossal lighthouse or martello tower at sea. From it a great wall streams away in front to another broad building in the western end. The castle is in shape like an immense dumb-bell, more than a quarter of a mile in length, and 120 yards broad at either end, while the middle is comparatively narrow. Yet large though it appears, it is only by measuring that one can realise its true size, so perfect is its shapeliness and proportion. Climbing the hill to the rough foundation stones of the tower, we skirted the south wall, and entered by a breach about the middle of the narrow central part. The ground was strewn and planted with

broken pottery and detached tesseræ, fragments whose colours and patterns were still plainly distinguishable. Inside the walls the earth was even more rich in such relics, and pieces of very prismatic weathered glass were common. The castle must have been capable of quartering a small army, and the quantity of broken vessels confirms the impression. Cisterns, vaulted and groined archways, mosaic floors, dungeons, and every other luxury of their European homes had been imported hither. A huge bell chiselled out of a single block of resonant limestone has been caught by the broken walls, and held from falling, above the western gate. Nothing could surpass the impression of big purpose, and of power and patience to carry out that purpose to its last detail, which the castle produces on the beholder. To us it came home with all the more force when we discovered that one of the strong men who had held the fortress bore the name of Brus. The architecture of Banias is more strikingly composite than almost any which we saw. The cross arches and some of the inbuilding were evidently Turkish, the main design and masonry Crusader, while the heavy stones of the lower courses appeared to be of Jewish workmanship.

It was not, however, by any means the universal rule that crusading castles were built on old foundations —at least on Jewish ones. The Crusaders ran a line of fortresses along that western edge of the Jordan valley where Israel, as we saw, failed to protect the mouths of her gorges. Belvoir, "the Star of the Wind," guards

from its lofty promontory the passes immediately south of the Sea of Galilee. Bethshan itself, where the Canaanites lingered to the standing shame of Israel, shows the well-preserved remains of a crusader bridge and fortress. Not less striking is the sea-board line of castles. Not only in such old localities as Tyre and Sidon, Cæsarea and Joppa, did fortresses arise, but on at least two quite new sites—those of Athlit and Acre. Athlit is unmentioned in Scripture, and only the eye of seafaring soldiers could have discovered how its little crease in the long straight line of coast might be utilised for defence. Acre is "the Key to Syria"; but it was left for the Crusaders to discover that fact.

Yet with all this might and purpose and strategic instinct manifest in every mile of Syria, failure is written broad across the land in these ruins. At two points the sense of it becomes especially acute. One is the battlefield below the very mountain which tradition has assigned to the preaching of the Sermon on the Mount. The horrors of that field were such that even yet it is impossible to look without shuddering upon the flattened top of Hattin, where the black basalt stands out from the green slopes below. The Crusaders were rushed into the open plain, near which Saladin's cavalry were waiting for them, and they met his assault unfed, unrested, and without even water to quench their thirst. Throughout a long hot day they perished round the banner of the Cross, a final element of horror being added when the Saracens set fire to the scrub, and unhorsed knights were roasted alive in their armour. That was

the decisive battle of the Crusades, and Saladin marched after it straight upon Jerusalem.

The other point at which the failure of the Crusades has set up its monument is at their own Athlit. The creation of their genius, and for solidity and massive strength perhaps the most characteristic ruin in Syria, it is also the saddest thing of all they have left for a memorial. Near its rocks King Louis IX. of France —most unfortunate and yet most saintly of all crusading kings—was shipwrecked. Here, too, at the end of the thirteenth century, the Knights Templars made their last retreat after the fall of Acre, and it was from its castle that they departed—the last to abandon the last Crusade. Seen from the sea, the compact and rounded promontory of Athlit presents the appearance of a clenched fist menacing and defiant. Its history grimly corroborates the imagination that here through centuries of decay the land as it were gathers itself together, and thrusts out this grim headland in perpetual defiance of the Western world.

The Crusades stand for more in Palestine than it is easy to realise. The comprehensiveness of their historical significance is by no means exhausted when we have stated it in such paradoxes as those with which our chapter began. They were indeed the greatest sham and at the same time the greatest reality of Syrian history, but they were far more than that. They were heirs to all the past of the country, and they did much to perpetuate that past and to carry it on into the time to come. Even from the Moslem life they wrestled



MEDIÆVAL BUILDING OUTSIDE THE NORTH WALL OF JERUSALEM

This building, which is now occupied as a farmhouse, is the centre of a favourite camping-ground for European and American visitors.





with, they borrowed something. They, and the chivalry which they fostered, are the most spectacular part of Western history, and give a dash of brilliant colour to the grey life of the Middle Ages. That brilliance is in part the splendour of the East. The Crusader has borrowed from the Saracen at least a scarf for his sword.

It is chiefly as builders that the Crusaders remain in Syria exposed to modern eyes, and in their building they have perpetuated and utilised the other three invasions. From the first Christians they took over their churches and rebuilt them, retaining something and adding more. From the older Jewish architects they had almost as great an inheritance. There seems no incongruity in the heavy stone mangers and far-driven iron rings which they fixed in the walls of those tremendous vaults on which the Temple area rests; and it is by a not unnatural transference that tradition has given to these the name of Solomon's Stables. Solomon's vaults they may have been, but as stables they were of crusading origin. Their own building is a rough imitation of the drafted stones of the Jews. The rustic work is much the same, only rougher, but the plain chiselling is very far from the minute fineness of the older workmanship. Altogether, they were fighters first and builders second. Like the men of Nehemiah's time, "every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. . . . Every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded." Nor did they fail to

utilise the work of Roman builders. At Cæsarea there is the most striking instance of this, and one of the most suggestive facts in the whole story of the Crusaders. Cæsarea was the most Roman of all Syrian towns. Built as the seaport for Sebaste by Herod, it was the part of Syria which travellers and governors sailing from Italy first sighted, and it was designed to give them the impression of a land Romanised. Herod's delight in pillars is attested by the colonnades of Sebaste, and the wealth of shaft and capital which marks the ruins of all his cities. But in Cæsarea he seems to have excelled himself. The Roman mole which forms the northern side of the harbour "is composed of some sixty or seventy prostrate columns lying side by side in the water like rows of stranded logs."[1] On the long promontory south of the mole stands the Crusader Castle, notable for the circumstance that the Crusaders built hundreds of lighter and shorter columns into their walls to thorough-bind them, so that, in Oliphant's exact and graphic words, "the butts project like rows of cannon from the side of a man-of-war." Which thing is for an allegory; and one of the most eloquent of all sermons in stone it is. Rome did more for Christianity than all its friends, while she was as yet its enemy. Without her courts of justice Paul would have had short shrift from his countrymen. Her roads and her citizenship gave to the first missionaries of the Cross their exit upon the world and their opportunity. Her laws gave them not protection only, but

[1] *Haifa*, Laurence Oliphant, p. 189.

a groundwork for much that entered into that theology which conquered the thought of the world. Paul appealed unto Cæsar, and he wrote to the Romans his gospel expressed in the forms with which they were most familiar. And it was at Cæsarea that he made his appeal, doing in flesh and blood what his disciples a thousand years later did in stone—thorough-binding the walls of the building of Christian faith with Roman columns.



PART III

THE SPIRIT OF SYRIA





SOUTH WALL OF JERUSALEM FROM THE NORTH END OF THE VILLAGE OF SILOAM

THE domed building in the left upper corner is the large Synagogue on Mount Zion. The dome to the right belongs to the Mosque of El Aksa, of which we see the southern side as well as the main roof and the end of the northern porch. The substructures underneath the building conceal the Double Gate, supposed to be the *Huldah portal* of the Talmud. The wall lower down, of which the angle faces the spectator, is part of the Southern Wall of the City. The valley is that of Jehoshaphat, or Kidron. The retaining wall in the foreground protects the sharp declivity below the village of Siloam. The paths which cross the light-coloured uncultivated *débris*, here covering the side of the valley to a depth of some 60 or 70 feet, lead southwards to the Fountain of the Virgin, and north to the lower bridge of the Kidron and St. Stephen's Gate. The cast shadow is from a passing cloud. Early morning.





In the first and second parts of this book we have been collecting impressions of the Land and its Invaders. It remains for us in the third part to gather these together into something which may enable us to realise more clearly the general meaning and quality of the spirit of Syria. In the main two things must be noted, and the first of them is religious. Whatever else Palestine may be, she is certainly a land with a God. The meaning of Syria is disclosed in her Israelite and Christian periods, whose great fact and characteristic process is the revelation of God to men on earth. All her other invasions have to reckon with that fact. Some of them were bitterly hostile to it, but they were powerless to efface it. Others were indifferent, entering Syria for ends of their own ; but history shews them bent over to God's purposes and unconsciously made the instruments of working out His will. That will brought Israel to her land, isolated her there, hemmed her in, bore her and carried her in everlasting arms on through her centuries, finally was incarnate in her life. For Jesus Christ was a Syrian, and we must orientalise our thoughts of Him before we can rightly understand the Christian revelation.

Not less clear is the second impression, which is that of the unfinishedness and imperfection of all things Syrian. It is a place of wreckage, new and old. But the peculiarity of that wreckage is that it was always there, more or less. None of the ideals of the land were ever quite realised. It was never completely conquered by the Israelites, their ambition stopping short and their energy flagging before their task was done. It was never completely cultivated, or made to yield its full harvest of natural wealth. In countless small things this incompleteness is evident. The contrast between the beauty of the distant view and the disorder and slovenliness of the near has been already noted. The post-office in Damascus is a quite good post-office, so far as letters and telegrams go. But you inquire for these in a hall which looks like a very dirty stable-yard with a very dirty fountain in the middle of it, furnished with little rough-sawn wooden boxes for private letters, such as no self-respecting grocer would pack with oranges. Even the tombs, about which so much sacredness is supposed to gather, are the untidiest of sepulchres. You may see a large and expensive tombstone, shining white in the distance, with all the air of aristocratic self-importance which man's pride can lend to death ; but when you approach, it is railed off with bamboo and barbed wire which might have been picked off a rubbish-heap. There are good roads in places, but they lead to nowhere. Generally they collapse into mere watercourses after a few miles, or they run on in a squared and measured lane of sharp boulders down



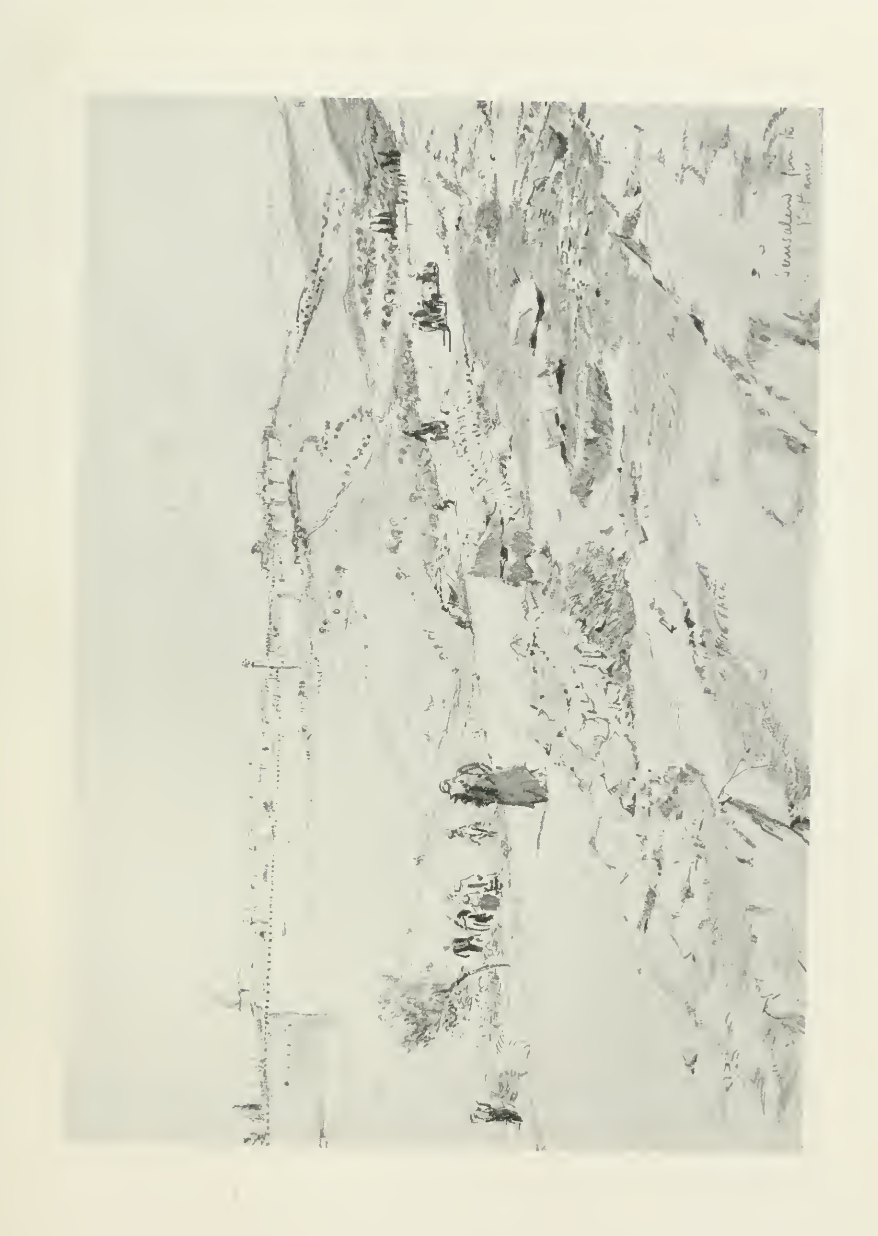
JERUSALEM, WITH THE ROAD FROM BETHANY

This view shews the whole extent of the Eastern Wall of Jerusalem. The Dome of the Rock rises above the south-east corner ; near the middle of the Eastern Wall is the Golden Gate.

Bethany lies about a mile and a half south-east of this spot.

The cypresses of Gethsemane are seen at the turn of the road at the right of the picture.

In the extreme distance is Mount Scopas.





which no horse can walk. Nor is this incompleteness a peculiarity of Turkish administration. Probably nothing in Palestine is older than the landmarks which divide the fields. From generation to generation these have been held sacred, laws against their removal having been in force among the ancient Canaanites before the conquest by Israel. So sacred are they that even murderers and thieves will seldom dare to tamper with them. Yet through all the long past the landmarks are said to have remained as the first men laid them down—mere inconspicuous heaps of little stones, the easiest things in the world to remove.

When we take the unfinishedness of the land along with the revelation and consider them together, we can hardly fail to gain a lesson of far-reaching meaning. The great incompleteness of Syria—the thing in which her life has been most lamentably unfinished—was her response to the revelation of her God. She never was at pains to understand it; she never fully opened her heart to its new progress, nor felt her high destiny as the bearer of good tidings to the world. She never seriously set herself to obey its plainest ethical demands. The wreckage is her price paid for the neglect. No man nor nation can finish any task to perfection, who has not done justice to such revelation of God as his heart and conscience have received. It is truth to the inward light that keeps us from losing heart and enables us to feel that energy and patience to the end are worth our while. Right dealing with revelation is the secret of all efficient performance. The combination in Palestine

of such revelation and such defect in strenuous action shows us a land that has just missed the most amazing destiny on earth.

It is in the remembrance of these thoughts that the chapters of this part should be read. The Shadow of Death has fallen because these men could not escape their knowledge of some greatness in death, more moving than anything life had to show. The spectral is but a degenerate and perverse form of their sense of God. The Cross gives its ethical significance to the burden and sorrow of the land. Resurrection shows signs even now that God has not yet done with Syria. But first, before we treat these aspects of her spirit, let us look at it on its brighter side—the smile and song of the land.

CHAPTER I

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF THINGS

One easily forgets, among the many sorrows of the Holy Land, that there is any lighter side to the picture there. Yet such a side there is, and always has been. Nature is not always severe, nor the spirit of man melancholy, in the East. Both nature and man are sometimes found in lighter vein here as elsewhere. Stevenson's most charming good word for the world he always defended so gallantly, is specially applicable to the Syrian part of it.—"It is a shaggy world, and yet studded with gardens; where the salt and tumbling sea receives rivers running from among reeds and lilies." Syria has always known the value of her gardens, and felt the sweet enchantment of her reeds and lilies. Was not her first story told of a garden where four such rivers flowed, and her noblest sermon that whose text was the "lilies of the field" and "the birds of the air"? What pleasantness of open nature there is in these two latter expressions! What sense of field-breadth and sky-space, in which the Preacher had room for breathing and for delight. Every Israelite,

sitting under his vine and fig tree, or going forth to meditate in the fields at evening, knew this charm. From of old the inhabitants have taken delight in exchanging roofs for bowers in their fields and gardens, or for booths, built with green branches on their house-roofs. Many a sweet vista is seen in Palestine framed in trellised vines or in passion-flower swinging over a roofed fountain or a garden house. The mountains were often bare and unhomely, for at no time can any but a minor part of them have been cultivated; yet even the wind-swept heights were inhabited by health and hope and gladness, and when a shepherd passed by, or the reapers shouted in the harvest-fields, the heart of the men of Israel sang aloud. In the words of the 65th Psalm this exhilaration and childlike glee finds its most perfect expression; we quote them in that old Scottish rhymed version which has so singularly caught their spirit:—

> They drop upon the pastures wide,
>   That do in deserts lie;
> The little hills on ev'ry side
>   Rejoice right pleasantly.
>
> With flocks the pastures clothed be,
>   The vales with corn are clad;
> And now they shout and sing to thee,
>   For thou hast made them glad.

Similarly the Jordan, usually thought of with a certain gloom, and rendered still more dismal by its persistent allegorical association with death, is by no



THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY AT BETHLEHEM FROM A GARDEN ON THE OPPOSITE HILL

In the foreground is a fountain covered by a pergola overgrown with the passion-flower plant and vine.





means so melancholy as it is supposed to be. Its rise, indeed, was from a black cave, where ancient pagan worship erected its shrines, seeing life issue there from the abyss of death. Its course leads it far down, like the dark stream of classic fable, below the surface of the earth and ocean. Yet there is no sense of all that as one looks at it from any point in its course. The trees of Syria are generally disappointing. For the most part solitary, or undersized where there is a wood; many of them are decaying, and most of them are dull in colour. But the vegetation of the Jordan is a bright exception. Even at its lowest point, when it is hurrying over the last miles to the Dead Sea, it flows through that rich boscage known as the "Swellings" or the "Pride" of Jordan, where pilgrims cut their staves. It is to this part of its course that the words in *Tancred* apply most exactly, "The beauty and abundance of the Promised Land may still be found . . . ever by the rushing waters of the bowery Jordan." Warburton, describing the same scene in early morning, speaks of the awakening of birds and beasts there, and then the sunrise, adding, "I lingered long upon that mountain's brow, and thought that, so far from deserving all the dismal epithets that had been bestowed upon it, I had not seen so cheerful or attractive a scene in Palestine."

The scents of the East add to the delightfulness of Nature on her pleasant side. There are plenty of abominable smells there, but these are in the towns and villages. The open country is continually surprising

and refreshing its travellers with new perfume. That this is fully appreciated by the natives, no reader of the Bible can forget. There we have the scent of spices and of wine; of the field, of water, and of Lebanon; of budding vines, mandrakes, apples; of ointment, of incense, and of raiment. In such references we see the East inhaling the fragrance of the land with an almost passionate delight. It is all there still. The scent of the desert after rain has been already referred to, but the same aromatic perfume may be enjoyed by climbing the hills above Beyrout, where every ground-plant seems to breathe forth spices. Again, there are the blossoming trees, the heavy perfume of orange-flower, and the simple fragrance of roses. Best of all, there is the clean smell of ripe grain in the corn-fields, and the fresh, briny exhilaration of breezes from the sea.

Such is the lighter side of Nature; and man is not by any means so far out of touch with it as is often supposed. The severity of material conditions and of historical experience has not been able quite to suppress man's gaiety. It is well that this has been so, for here certainly the words of the Scots' song are true enough: "Werena my heart licht, I wad dee." With so much of the darker powers of the universe pressing hard upon them, one trembles to imagine what the spirit of Syria would have been without those inexhaustible stores of gaiety that break forth sometimes like her great river from the very darkness of the abyss. Her laughter is not that of progressive lands looking to the future in



THE FORD OF THE JORDAN NEAR JERICHO

This ford is near the Monastery of St. John, erected, according to tradition, by the Empress Helena over the grave of John the Baptist. The hills in the distance are the mountains of the Hauran. The vivid green of the foliage is characteristic of the lower part of the valley of the Jordan. Late afternoon in May.





the great joy of an intelligent hope. It is rather a part of her inalienable childhood, whose fresh sweetness and virginity have somehow been permitted to remain through all her sorrows. Renan describes the heroes of the Bible as "always young, healthy, and strong, scarcely at all superstitious, passionate, simple, and grand." There is still some inheritance of such life, perpetually young and even childish, in the Holy Land.

The first appearance of an Eastern is grave and solemn, with an element of contempt in it rather trying to the would-be jester or too familiar stranger. But this is not wholly due to any weight of gloom pressing on his heart. It has, with singular ingenuity, been traced to quite minor and apparently insignificant causes, such as the wearing of flowing robes by the men and the burden-bearing of the women. There can be no doubt that both clothes and burdens exercise a powerful influence on character ; and it may well be the case that the management of their garment has taught dignity to the men, while the carrying of heavy waterpots has helped to make the women graceful and erect. There is also the instinct of self-defence, and the constant remembrance of danger. Every Eastern, however prosperous, impresses one with the idea that his table is spread for him in the presence of his enemies. This leads him—especially if he be an Arab—to assume a show of superiority and a bullying swagger, which seem to the uninitiated quite impervious to any thought of fun. But the mask is easily laid aside, and the gravest and

most contemptuous Syrian will suddenly collapse into harsh laughter or forget himself in childish interest.

It must be confessed that the lighter side of Syrian character has to be maintained against very general opinion. We are told that there is no sense of humour in native Palestine; that self-conceit precludes it, festivity being a matter rather of pomp than of any real gaiety; and that the Eastern does not understand or indulge in "chaff," his wildest outbreak of humour reaching no further than those solemn and laboured puns of which he has always been so fond. Certainly there is much that might confirm such a view. You are taken with a dangerous seriousness among these people. Visiting the class of a Christian girls' school we were asked to address them, and after many refusals, a speaker was at last found. He revenged himself upon his companions by informing the class that his friends were "dumb dogs" who could not speak. We afterwards learned that the girls had been amazed beyond measure that his words were allowed to pass without revenge or even remonstrance! The mere facts of quarantine and customs being taken seriously, are enough to persuade one that Syria is devoid of humour. The doctors who appear on deck and count the passengers instead of examining them; the little spray of doubtful water which is squirted on your smallest bag, locked, and containing, perhaps, a pair of shoes and a soiled collar, while your luggage rests unpurified in two large portmanteaus left behind you in the ship; the utter farce of the customs, acknowledged

so shamelessly that Baedeker advises a few francs paid not in presence of the superior officials ; these things, accepted as part of life's common business and routine, are surely sufficient to prove that the sense of humour is entirely wanting. Among the older features of the life, too, there is abundant evidence to the same effect. An eastern city like Damascus wakens early in the morning, and after dark it is silent and asleep. You may walk from end to end of it, and yet hear no song, nor see any performance of any kind whatsoever. There is no theatre in almost any of the cities, except it be the ruined amphitheatre, whose last performance was a couple of thousand years ago.[1] The Eastern does assuredly take his pleasures solemnly. On one occasion we arrived at our tents to find a "poet" or improvisator waiting for us. That evening's scene is one which will not soon be forgotten. The minstrel seated himself on the ground, while we formed a wide circle round him, and the camp-servants stood behind, at first critical and jocular, but soon succumbing to the solemnity of the function. From a cloth bag he produced an instrument which bore close resemblance to a domestic shovel, much the worse for wear, and perforated with little irregular holes as if it had been shot. It had one string only, and there was a bow for scraping it withal. He began to play, and sang a selection which soon conquered any levity

[1] Beyrout is an exception to this rule. The Café Chantant and the Opera supply its cosmopolitan population with Western entertainments, provided by troupes of artistes travelling northward after the close of their Cairo season.

that may have greeted his beginning. He improvised as he went along, in double-rhymed verses, rhyming *a c*, *b d*. He had but a few tunes, and they all ended in the minor *doh si lah*, the *lah* being prolonged, diminuendo and tremolo, in a long wail that had a sob in it. While the wail was dying away his head was thrown forward and his face uplifted, the upper lip quivering rapidly and the eyes rolling from side to side. Then, just as it seemed to have reached silence, came a quick, spasmodic outburst, very loud and clear, with vigorous accompaniment, which in its turn died off in the same long wail. All this must be imagined with a wonderful sunset of gold in a sky of indigo and grey, against which the figure of the Arab sat in dark silhouette.[1]

Yet when all this is said, it remains true that even the casual observer can see much unmistakable fun and enjoyment of the lighter side of Syrian life. Even in the set forms of amusement it is discernible. The minstrel whom we have described was quite open for joking when he had emerged from his "ecstasy." The fantazia is a performance by no means wholly devoid of merriment. The word fantazia is said to have been introduced by the Franks, but the entertainment

[1] The words of the songs were various. There were chapters of the Koran, and a short hymn in praise of Allah and the Prophet; the story of a religious war proclaimed by the Sultan against the Druses, in which the sympathies of the singer were entirely on the side of the Sultan; there was an ode to our chief, "the greatest hakim from Stamboul to Damascus"; an account of the British nation, "a terrible people, who made steamboats and engines, and who are here to-day and away to-morrow"; and finally a long description of the objects visible to the singer—the heap of saddle-bags, the horses and the tents, with broad hints concerning bakhshish.

is Eastern enough now. It is, in its more elaborate form, a combination of dance and pantomime, with mock fighting and other mimicry. But the term is used in a very general way for any kind of recreation. In the camp at night a sound of song, with outbursts of hilarity in it, is often heard. If you go out behind the tents to the spot where the servants are seated round their lantern, you will hear long chants and snatches of song and recitation, partly religious and partly very secular indeed. The singer sits with his head resting on one hand and a finger closing his ear. He sways his body to and fro sidewise, and the song flows on until suddenly the whole circle breaks forth into laughter, apparently at some interpolated jest or topical allusion. Still more merry is the species of fantazia celebrated in honour of a *kharuf*, or fatted-sheep feast. Now and then, on the march, the present of a sheep was made to the camp-servants and muleteers. When it was cooked we saw them sitting round it on the ground in circles, tearing it to pieces and eating it with their hands, unaided by knife, fork, or any other weapon of the European dinner-table. And at such times there was no possibility of mistake as to the mirth.

It would be wonderful if it were otherwise. The East is full of provocatives to mirth—not merely such as seem ridiculous to a stranger because they are foreign, but things grotesque in themselves. Take the one instance of the camel. Much has been written about him from many points of view, but justice has never

yet been done to the camel as a humorous person Yet he is the most humorous of all the inhabitants of the East. Beside him, with his sardonic pleasantry, the monkey is a mountebank and the donkey but a solemn little ass. He has been described as "the tall, simple, smiling camel"; but on closer acquaintance he turns out to be hardly so simple as he might be taken for, and if he smiles, he is generally smiling at you. The camels you meet in Syria are carrying barley with the air of kings, and regarding their human companions with, at best, a sentiment of contemptuous tolerance. The lower lip of a camel is one of the most expressive features in the whole repertoire of natural history. The humours of this animal reached for us their climax at Sheikh Miskin, while we were waiting for the Damascus train. A camel had been persuaded to kneel in order to receive its load of long poles brought by the railway. It was roaring steadily, in a fiendish and yet conscientious manner. Ten men were loading it, of whom one stood upon its near fore-leg, two fastened the poles upon its back, and the remaining seven looked on and made remarks. The beast waited until the poles were all but fixed—ten of them or so. Then it indulged in a shake, which sent them rolling in all directions. Finally it was loaded, with two of the sticks on one side and one on the other, their ends projecting far out behind and in front. It rose, nearly ruining a well-dressed Arab who had somehow got in among it. Just then the train arrived and the camel fled incontinently, sidewise like a crab, spreading the



STUDY OF CAMELS AND ATTENDANTS

Camels of this type are used as ordinary beasts of burden for all purposes throughout Palestine.





fear of death in man and beast for many yards around, and dragging a terrified driver, who hung on to its head-rope, across towards the distant east. A loaded camel behaving in this fashion is a deadlier weapon than a loaded gun.

Now the native wit always appeared to us to have modelled itself on camel drollery of this sort. It is generally personal, and its essential function is to hit somebody. It lacks freshness, and has a certain suggestion of a clown with "crow's feet" under his eyes. Sometimes indeed a Syrian indulges in jokes at his own expense, but more frequently his facetiousness is at the expense of others, and it is tolerably direct. The habit of nicknames lends itself to Oriental wit, the lean man being described familiarly as "Father of Bones," and the stout man as "Full Moon of Religion." Passing through a village some distance off the usual route of travellers, we were surrounded with villagers who asked the dragoman why we had come. "To take away your country!" was the answer, and it was met with peals of laughter. Another witticism which was immensely appreciated was the remark to some farmers who were suffering from drought that we in England had stolen their rain and it had made many people sick there. A boatman on the Sea of Galilee was being chaffed unmercifully upon the fact that he had once tried to commit suicide. He appealed, smiling, to one of the passengers as "My Father," and pled that he had been mad when he did that. A fellow-boatman rebuked him for calling the

gentleman "father of a lunatic," and the whole crew was dissolved in laughter, the victim himself heartily joining in the chorus. In Damascus we found a time-worn Joe Miller in the shout of the nosegay-seller—a very musical cry, which the guide-book translates "Appease your mother-in-law," *i.e.* by presenting her with a bouquet.

From of old pleasure has been apt to degenerate in the luxurious East, and the fun of Syrians shows abundant traces of such degeneration. Many unpleasant elements mingle with it. One of the recognised forces in Eastern life is *humbug*—barefaced bluff and transparent pretence, which is apparently seen through and yet retains its potency. The lengths to which this method may go are almost incredible, and cases are on record of interpreters who have volubly translated a long English address and afterwards confessed that they did not know a word of the English language. At times, also, high spirits leads to savagery. The men who were in charge of our animals were kind and even affectionate to them, but their moods changed unaccountably. Your donkey-driver, trotting behind his donkey, will sometimes encourage it with yelling which would fill any animal less philosophical with the fear of instant extermination, and he jocularly throws rocks at it until you stop him. Worst of all, the Syrian humour constantly tends towards indecency of the most bestial type. The song with which a musical donkey-boy relieves the monotony of the journey is sometimes quite untranslatable. The "body-dances," which form the staple

entertainment provided by wandering Arabs, are often pantomimic, and their crude realism is unspeakably disgusting.

Yet there is a very innocent and cheerful vein in the human nature of Syria. At times it is irrelevant and trying. The camp guards, *e.g.* who are hired from the nearest village to watch the sleeping tents, are apt to beguile the hours of darkness in a manner hardly conducive to repose. In most of our camps they were silent figures, flitting about in an almost ghostly fashion, with perfectly noiseless footsteps. But MacGregor complains of having had to pay his Egyptian guards "for sleeping very loud to keep away the robbers." Our difficulties were not exactly the same as his, but in some places the guards kept singing as they paced to and fro, and shouted cheerily to one another along the whole length of the encampment, or whistled incessantly, and occasionally fired guns to prove their vigilance. There is a sense of spontaneity and heartiness about the mirth of the East which throws into strong contrast its subtler and more gloomy characteristics. Irresponsible and gay, Syrians seem to be grown-up children, and they retain the ways of childhood. We rarely saw children playing games, but bands of full-grown men were seen at times playing schoolboys' field games with much shouting. Everybody in the cities appears to be either selling or eating sweetmeats. Sport is rare, but men go forth with guns to shoot little birds like sparrows. One of the most curious sights of Damascus is that of shopkeepers and artisans

who go about the streets followed by pet lambs instead of dogs, the wool of these strange little creatures being dyed in brilliant spots of blue or pink.

The kindliness of the East is as genuine and as pleasing as that of any land in the West. It is not in evidence indeed when there is nothing to call it forth. As you pass through the country, the villagers and townsfolk regard you with indifference if not with scorn. But one must remember the universal *acting* of the East—its devotion to appearances, and its very curious ideas as to which appearances are most becoming. With that in mind, the indifference and the scorn become less alarming. You may find the whole spirit of the situation suddenly change to one of the kindliest. A traveller who has fallen victim to one of the malarial fevers which are so common in Syria at certain periods, will never forget the tenderness with which his camp-servants come about his tent inquiring, "Ente mabsut?" (Are you happy, or well?). When he returns the inquiry the answer is, "Ente mabsut, ana mabsut" (If you are happy, I am happy). Such a conversation we ourselves heard at Banias. At Sidon we had just arrived and had the tents pitched in the open space next the burying-ground. It was Thursday, and the graves were crowded with visitors—Mohammedan women in black, white, or light-coloured robes. They did not seem very sad, even beside the most recent graves, but gossiped and enjoyed their half-holiday, disappearing before sunset silently, like a flock of pigeons to their dovecots. The spectacle was theatrical and almost unearthly. It was



SYRIAN SHEPHERDS AND SHEPHERD BOY





difficult to persuade oneself that these flitting figures were really women at all; they seemed rather to be animated bits of landscape. Just while we were watching this, and feeling all its dreamy remoteness from human life as we had ever known it, two new figures appeared. They were the gardener of a neighbouring garden and his young daughter Wurda (Rhoda, Rose). She was five years of age, a tiny vision of black eyes and hair, the hair being arranged in two pigtails down her back. She brought a little bunch of roses for each of us, and as she gave them kissed our hands with as sweet a shyness as any child anywhere could have done. The incident, like that on the hill of Samaria, lingers on the memory, and bears witness to a world of gentleness and kindliness such as we had little dreamed of. Altogether there are abundant signs that in ancient days there must have been much of that Syrian life described by one scholar as "gay and bright, festive and musical — the very home of songs and dances." It is pleasant to know that although the fortunes of the land have saddened her so terribly, there still remains something at least of her former gaiety.

Even the religion of Syria has its lighter side. Every student of the Bible knows how much there was of rejoicing and fresh childlike revelling in the situation, in the worship of ancient Israel. It is peculiarly interesting to find that in the Semitic worship before and apart from the invasion of Israel, so kindly and friendly a relation subsisted between man and his gods. "The

circle into which a man was born was not simply a group of kinsfolk and fellow-citizens, but embraced also certain divine beings, the gods of the family and of the state, which to the ancient mind were as much a part of the particular community with which they stood connected as the human members of the social circle."[1] Accordingly it would appear that among these ancient Semites the conception of sacrifice was by no means so gloomy as it came to be later, when the moral tragedy of life was more clearly realised. The idea was that of "communion with the deity in a sacrificial meal of holy food." They "go on eating and drinking and rejoicing before their god with the assurance that he and they are on the best of jovial good terms. . . . Ancient religion assumes that through the help of the gods life is so happy and satisfactory that ordinary acts of worship are all brightness and hilarity, expressing no other idea than that the worshippers are well content with themselves and with their divine sovereign."[2]

Of course the severer truth and cleaner conscience which Israel's revelation brought her gradually deepened the shadows on her religious life. She substituted duty for happiness, the beauty of holiness for the mere *joie de vivre*, and the tragic blessedness of forgiveness for the careless pleasures of life. Yet to the end she retained and insisted on the gladness of religion. The duty of joy was a command and not merely an epigram for Israel. Dante himself was not more explicit in his condemnation of perverse sullenness than was he who

[1] *The Semites*, Robertson Smith, p. 29. [2] *Ibid.* pp. 244, 257.

wrote, "Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things: therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies."[1] Thus the great feasts of Israel were from the first observed as joyous occasions. Besides their solemn ethical meaning, they were the times when the people realised their fellowship not only with God but with one another; and they kept alive much of that social intercourse whose loyalties and friendships are so essential to true patriotism. Every one of those festivals had its own association with joy and gladness. The Sabbath itself, with its weekly call to the restful remembrance of God, was called "a delight" by the pious Israelite. But most of all, the Feast of Tabernacles, which followed close on the great Passover memorial with its Day of Atonement, was the very climax of breezy and open-air gladness. The green booths in which it was celebrated, after the year's toils were over and the fruit of the field gathered home, were standing parables of pleasant shelter and health and comfort. Such booths may be seen to-day from north to south of Palestine, with families resting in them, safe from the toilsome heat of summer.

It is surely a very striking fact that the spots which all travellers select as those in which the gladness of the land dwells most freely still are Nazareth and Bethlehem. For beauty of feature and of dress, and for their general air of pleasant and light-hearted gaiety, these are the acknowledged centres. It was of Bethlehem

[1] Deut. xxviii. 47, 48.

that we felt this most true. Its name, signifying "House of Bread," is significant of plenty and of comfort. Its associations, even apart from the song of angels there, are sweet and gracious. While approaching it, you look across a pleasant and lightsome landscape to the dim blue mountains of Moab, and remember how Ruth looked across these very fields, when the reapers of Boaz were working in them, to her distant home in those mountains. Here it was that King David in his boyhood played and tended the flocks of his father, and it was the water of that sweet well for which he longed in the days of his adversity. These and a hundred other memories prepare the traveller for a place of gracious and kindly sweetness.

To a certain extent, here as elsewhere, the nearer approach disenchants one. There is poverty and dirt, and perhaps a little rudeness. The public square, or open place, is beset with youths who have been in Europe or America — selling at an exhibition or an Oriental warehouse. These know English enough to make themselves annoying, as they shout for custom. Finding this in Bethlehem is like finding the money-changers in the temple-courts. Yet, after all, that is but a detail. The place is a pleasant place, and its inhabitants are an attractive people. They live chiefly by agriculture and cattle-breeding, but there is a market-place where the Arabs from the western or near side of the Dead Sea sell their produce, and a thriving trade is carried on. Every Syrian locality has its characteristic article of manufacture, and the local



THE FIELDS OF RUTH AND BOAZ NEAR BETHLEHEM

The point of view is just outside the walls of Bethlehem looking towards the mountains of Moab, which are seen in the distance. The Dead Sea is hidden by the Judean hills in the middle distance. Evening light.





industry of Bethlehem seems to have a peculiar fitness. It is mother-of-pearl that is wrought here into very beautiful rosaries and other ornaments. The men are energetic and lively, and it has been observed that at the great pilgrim gathering at the Jordan, the camp of native Christians from Bethlehem is conspicuous for its hilarity.[1] The beauty of the women of Bethlehem is proverbial. In Kinglake's *Eothen* we have the "dull oppression," the "sad and sombre decorum," and "the stern and gloomy morality" of Mohammedan localities, where "for long the wearied traveller may go without catching one glimpse of outward happiness," contrasted with the "cheering clatter of social freedom and the voices of laughing girls" at Bethlehem. And then, with that delicious waywardness of his, the author's thoughts run on after these same laughing girls through all the remaining pages of his chapter.

[1] *The Cradle of Christianity*, D. M. Ross, p. 151.

CHAPTER II

THE SHADOW OF DEATH

We now turn sharply to the other side of things, and it must be apparent to every one that we are passing from the smaller to the vastly greater element in the spirit of Syria. The text in Deuteronomy which we quoted[1] shows us joy commanded at the sword's point, as if the nation were unwilling and unlikely to obey easily the happy command. Even when Jesus Christ repeats the injunction in His great words, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad," it is a defiant gladness He enjoins. The context shows that the rejoicing is that of persecuted and slandered men. A recent writer has bitterly described our march through life in the words: "We uphold our wayward steps with the promises and the commandments for crutches, but on either side of us trudge the shadow Death and the bacchanal Sex."[2] The words sound profane to Western ears, but they are not untrue of the spirit of Syria. It is of "the shadow Death" that the present chapter treats.

[1] Deut. xxviii. 47, 48.

[2] *Robert Browning*, William Sharp, p. 203.

As primitive religion decayed and men lost their sense of kinship and their easy and friendly relations with the old gods, they were left alone with death, which everywhere stared them in the face and claimed them for its own. Next to God, death is the most impressive fact in human experience, with sin for its sting. When old and defective views of God are passing away, two courses are open to men. As death closes in upon them, and they feel its grasp upon their unprotected souls, they may appeal from it to God, and find Him revealing Himself, with eternal life for them in the knowledge of Him. This was what the noblest of Israel's thinkers did, and the growing revelation of the Bible was their reward. God showed Himself to them in ever-increasing clearness, until one and another and another of them found that the hand that grasped them was "not Death but Love." But another course is open. They may enthrone death in place of the broken gods—"Death is king, and vivat rex!" They may "say to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister." Then the emphasis of thought will fall on the grave, and all men's imaginations will grow morbid.

That this has been the case in Palestine, no person who has seen the land will question. The first wayside sepulchre one sees thrills one with a peculiar chill and awe. Soon familiarity changes the shock to a lingering sense of gloom. Death is everywhere obtrusively in evidence. Jerusalem is belted by an almost unbroken girdle of tombs. Very many of the valleys gape with

open sepulchres. Some of the hillsides are honeycombed with them, till they resemble over-wrought quarries. It was beside such a hillside that this aspect of Syria forced itself most powerfully on us as we journeyed between Tyre and Sidon, through one of the sharpest thunderstorms of the year. The lightning was near and the thunder immediate. We were drenched with a torrent of rain which seemed to sweep upon us in vast sheets of water from the sea. We had to stop the horses, and let the torrent smite us in the back till it ran in streams from the tassels of our saddle-bags. Between the flashes all that was visible was a line of telegraph wires in front of us, and the long ruin of a Roman aqueduct behind. But every flash lit up the hillside, and showed the black and gaping mouths of burial-places in hundreds. The utter desolation of that chilly storm, lashing on us, flooding the rivers, and drenching the stones of sepulchres, was an experience which may better be imagined than described.

The tombs of the Holy Land are of many patterns. In his *Haifa*, Laurence Oliphant describes several different kinds of them, from the cave-sepulchres, or the underground galleries, to the little wayside graves or narrow holes driven into rock which seem such tightly-fitting homes for the dead. There are, of course, the modern graves sacred to the wives and children of missionaries who have laid down their lives in the loving service of Christ and man. Buckle the historian sleeps in the Christian burying-ground at Damascus, and Henriette Renan was laid to rest in



JERUSALEM.—EXTERIOR OF THE GOLDEN OR BEAUTIFUL GATE

This gate, which was walled up by the Arabs after the conquest of Jerusalem, forms a tower projecting from the Eastern Wall of the Temple Area, at a distance of about one-third of its length reckoning from the north-eastern corner. The enriched archivolt and pilaster capitals date apparently from the seventh century. The interior of the gateway, which is of course only accessible from the Temple Area, consists of a double vaulted chamber with monolithic columns. The character of the capitals and the ornamentation of the architraves of the interior indicate an early Byzantine date. The tombs in the foreground are part of the great Mohammedan Cemetery extending along the Eastern Wall of Jerusalem. The ancient pathway from the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Kidron) to the Golden Gate is indicated in the lower left-hand corner. The hill in the distance is the Mount of Evil Council. Late afternoon light; the rich colour of the wall and foreground in shadow is due to reflected light.





Byblus. These graves and others dear to the Western world are, as graves have been since Abraham's day, symbols of the strangers' inheritance and lot in the Holy Land. From these, back to the tombs of hoariest antiquity, the country is bound by an unbroken chain of death. Through all the centuries the dead have been thrust upon the notice of the living in a fashion so obtrusive as to make this the most obvious impression of the land. Most of the graves are those of persons now unknown and quite forgotten. Small and great, common men and heroes, are alike conspicuous in death. Each of the invaders has left his memorial, and the sites of ancient cities are traced by help of their burying-grounds.

Moslem tombs are everywhere. Most of them are oblong structures of rude but solid masonry erected over shallow graves. In some cases a painted tarbush (fez-cap) marks the head and a little upright stone the feet. A slight hollow is often cut in the flat top for birds to drink from. Tombs are clustered among their iris-flowers beside the walls of villages. They have crept up to the very summit of the hill which Gordon identifies as Calvary. They have encroached on the palace of Herod's daughter at Samaria. They crowd the ground outside the built-up "Gate Beautiful" at Jerusalem. There is, to our feelings, a certain indecency in this promiscuous invasion of the grave: Mohammedans seem to bury their dead anywhere. The Crusaders have left fewer memorials of themselves in the shape of tombs than one might have

expected. Barbarossa's tomb we have already visited. For the rest, their memorials are mostly those great buildings whose ruins stand to this day. Having done their work, they were content to rest in any nameless grave, however humble, in the Holy Land. Yet no one can fail to reflect upon the terrible mortality which marked every crusade. When, in 1270, Philip, the son of Louis IX. of France, returned from the East, he is said to have entered his dominions accompanied by the dead bodies of his father, his brother, and his wife. That grim incident is but too typical of the whole of these campaigns. Early Christianity, too, has left its tombs—catacombs and single graves, especially in the southern part of the coast, and eastwards in Hauran. People of importance have sometimes more than one tomb, like St. George, who is buried both in Lydda and Damascus. But the graves of humbler Christians are more precious than these, for their inscriptions remain, breathing forth the faith and peace with which Christ had blessed the world. Such memorials of victory over death are inextinguishable lamps hung in the sepulchres of Syria. And these lamps are kindled at the Great Light. Never was symbolism more appropriate than that of the Holy Fire in the Church of the Sepulchre. The very heart and soul of Syria is a tomb—the reputed grave of Jesus Christ. To this day the chief pilgrim song repeats with exultant reiteration the words, "This is the tomb of Christ." It is a song which has never been silent in the land. In the Crusader camps a herald closed the day with the

loud cry, "Lord, succour the Holy Sepulchre"; and the sentinels passed the word from post to post, "Remember the Holy Sepulchre."

It is not, however, the victory over death that impresses one as the spirit of Syria. It is death itself, unconquered, mysterious, and dark. Its Christian tombs are few and far between compared with the countless multitude of sepulchres where there is no lamp alight. Most common and most impressive of these are the Roman and Greek graves. The sands of Tyre and Sidon are strewn with sarcophagi. Here a magnificently carved stone coffin serves for a drinking-trough, there a little child's one stands alone and desolate near a river mouth. In Sidon the ancient cemetery is on a scale whose rifled grandeur speaks volumes concerning the vanity of earthly greatness. At Gadara, the eastward road is a miniature Appian Way: hollow to the tread of horses as they cross the excavated rock, and adorned with sarcophagi carved with crowns and garlands, but bearing inscriptions without hope in them. Farther north, on the eastern slopes of Hermon, we found a far older monument near one of the Druse villages. We were crossing a little brook, when we noticed that the bridge consisted of two huge monolithic slabs of limestone, which, on examination, appeared to be the lids of ancient sarcophagi. The carving on the ends was obviously intended to represent figures of cherubim or some such winged creatures. The heads were gone, but the plumage of the wings was very perfectly preserved. No one in the locality knew

anything about their origin. Their general appearance seemed to connect them with the far East.

The Jewish tombs are those which impress the imagination most with the bitterness of death in Syria. They are so sad, with their antique solemnity—so severely simple and unadorned. Where there is carving it is almost always of Roman or Christian workmanship. A few stones with such symbols as the seven-branched candlestick engraved on them are the only unquestionable remains of ornamental Jewish work. Few of the Jewish sepulchres have escaped appropriation by Gentiles. The more famous of them have been appropriated by the Mohammedans, and early Christian tradition is responsible for many other indentifications. The saints and heroes of Israel, claimed also by Mohammedans and Christians, have achieved a kind of funereal immortality which makes the whole land seem one vast graveyard. Every prospect is dotted with tombs. The tomb of Jonas shines white from its hill-top north of Hebron, that of Samuel north of Jerusalem, while Joseph's tomb commands the view where the Vale of Shechem opens on the wider valley of Makhnah. None of them, however, is at all so impressive as the tomb of Rachel, where a modern house and dome cover a rough block of stone worn smooth with the kisses of centuries of Jewish women. The wailing, as we saw it there, is a memorable custom. The women were mostly elderly or aged, but they were weeping real tears and wailing bitterly as they kissed the stone. It is an old story



THE TOMB OF RACHEL, ON THE ROAD FROM JERUSALEM TO HEBRON

It is stated, in the 35th chapter of Genesis, that Rachel died and was buried in the way to Hebron (Ephrath), and that Jacob set a pillar upon her grave, which was still standing when the book of Genesis was written.

The village on the hill behind the Tomb is Bet Jala. There is a very ancient olive in front of the Tomb, and the hills and valleys behind are covered with modern olives, which thrive in the rich red soil of this neighbourhood.





that consecrates that rough stone, but how eternal is its human pathos: "And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. . . . And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem."[1]

The earlier fashion of Jewish work seems to have been the "pigeon-hole," in which the corpse was thrust into a little tunnel six feet long driven at right angles to the rock face. Later, troughs were excavated to fit the body along the line of the rock. In some instances these graves, especially the former kind, are found in detached groups in wayside rocks, whose perpendicular faces front the open air. For the most part they are grouped in larger numbers within natural caves or subterranean excavations, whose low doorway is blocked by a large circular stone running in a groove. A later example of such a cave is that which is shewn as the "new tomb" of Joseph of Arimathea, close to Gordon's Calvary. A few specimens of another sort, built of masonry without cement, are to be found in Galilee.[2] Nothing could be gloomier than the constantly repeated ruins of ancient Jewish graves in Syria. No day's journey is without them. They meet you casually, as it were, at every turning. They are not, indeed, quite dark like the pagan tombs; but the twilight, in which the hope of immortality just broke the darkness for ancient Israel, is grey and cheerless,

[1] Gen. xxxv. 16, 19.
[2] *Haifa*, pp. 270-272; *Tent Work*, p. 85.

and the contribution of Jewish graves to the spirit of Syria is a very sombre one.

The typical spot for this side of the spirit of Syria is the town of Hebron. Distant from Bethlehem but some fifteen miles, it would be impossible to imagine two places whose effect upon their visitor is more opposite. "The contrast between Bethlehem and Hebron is very striking. . . . Hebron is a city of the past, wrapped in contemplation of its sacred tombs. Bethlehem is a thriving modern town—the birthplace of a faith that looks forward rather than back."[1] This contrast between the City of Death and the City of Life represents graphically the extremes of the spirit of the land. Palestine has ever been the battle-ground for the conflict between light and darkness, hope and despair, life and death. Not that Hebron is to outward appearance a place of misery. You enter it through some of the best cultivated land in the East, whose gently moulded hillsides are clad with olives, figs, and vines. Its suburbs present a wealthy and comfortable appearance, and the houses there are evidently those of well-to-do folk. The town itself is a large and rather imposing place. Its merchants carry on a brisk trade with the Arab tribes beyond the Dead Sea. They travel in that region with their goods, and have established large warehouses in Moab. Within the city there is considerable manufacture, especially in waterskins, glass, and lamps. The commercial importance of Hebron was curiously borne in upon us by the sight

[1] *Tent Work*, p. 146.



THE MOSQUE AT HEBRON OVER THE CAVE OF MACHPELAH

The Mosque consists of an elevated quadrangular platform, about 70 yards long by 35 wide, and about 15 yards above the street level. The platform is bounded by a wall of massive masonry, 39 feet high, attributed to the time of Herod the Great. Above the ancient wall there is built a modern Turkish wall with semi-circular battlements.

The picture shews the greater portion of one of the longer sides of the enclosure, that seen from the north-east. The minaret is at the north-west corner; the gable at the end of the grey roof is the north-west end of the twelfth-century church built by the Crusaders, and covering the tombs of the Patriarchs. The Herodian Wall, of which the lower part is concealed by buildings, from the point of view represented, is divided for decorative purposes by a series of pilasters, of which there are eighteen on the longer sides of the wall. The time is afternoon.





of a post-runner running with his mail-bag north along the road to Jerusalem.

Yet the town is stagnant as a deserted pool. Even the suburban houses give a prophecy of this as you enter. They are handsome houses of two storeys, but most of them are ruinous at the top, as if they had been built so far and then left unfinished. Within the town, modern life is dominated by ancient, though the original Hebron was not exactly on the present site. Hebron is one of the oldest cities in the world ; it was a sanctuary as well as a place of business from days long before those of Israel's occupation. Legends of all sorts, authentic and otherwise, have gathered about the place through an enormous length of time. It has been identified as the site of Adam's creation and death ; as the place of Abel's murder and Adam's mourning for him. Abraham made it his own by the tent pitched beneath its oak and the grave purchased in the field of Ephron. Joshua destroyed it ; David ruled Judah in it ; Absalom made it his headquarters after his rebellion. Abner was slain by Joab at its gate, and the murderers of Ishbosheth were hanged beside its pool.

That ancient life, so many of whose associations are of death, seems to have settled and grown stagnant there. This is partly due to the natural conformation of the mountain-ranges to the south of Hebron. A dangerous barrier, difficult of passage and haunted by savage bands of robbers, has diverted commerce and war to routes running north along the western coast or the eastern valley of the Ghor. The result com-

mercially has been a local traffic instead of a depot on the main line of merchants. As regards war, armies entering Syria from the south have passed this town by in like manner, from the raid of Chedorlaomer to the invasion of the Moslem conquerors.[1] War is a dreadful factor in human history, but there have been worse things than war, and better blessings than peace. The peace of Hebron has let her sink into moral and social decay, which her local Arabian commerce has not arrested, and her traditional "holiness" has deepened. Yet the real cause of the difference between Bethlehem and Hebron must be sought in the religious history of the towns. "It is the contrast," as Conder says, "between Christianity and Islam, between the vitality of the religion of progress and civilisation, and the hopeless stagnation of a fatalistic creed."[2] The skyline of Bethlehem is broken by a church spire, that of Hebron by a minaret. It is the touch of Christ that has made Bethlehem. There was no ancient shrine there, and it was not till the time when pilgrims thronged to it that it became a place of importance. Its modern prosperity dates from the day when in the early thirties of the nineteenth century Ibrahim Pasha drove out the Mohammedan inhabitants and made it an almost exclusively Christian town. Jesus never visited Hebron, so far as the record goes, and Abraham let it decay.

It is moribund with a vengeance! The sullenness

[1] Cf. *Historical Geography*, ch. xiii.

[2] *Tent Work*, p. 146.

of people you meet on the road gives token of its spirit before you enter. The street-scenes were the worst we saw from south to north. Women drew aside their veils to curse us as we passed. Stones were flung by unseen hands behind walls. In the centre of the town a man was twisting the arm of a boy, beating him furiously on the head and neck, flinging him on the road to kick and trample on him, and raising him up to repeat the whole process. The women were assembled in crowds upon the southern hillside, which is wholly covered with graves. When we inquired whether they were praying, the reply was : " Oh no, eating and talking ; themselves, they never pray ; their Sheikh, he prays for them."

Through the malicious crowd we walked to the mosque. The lanes and the dark bazaar were filthy and foul-smelling. The mosque is an impressive building, suggestive of military rather than devotional ideas. The Tomb of Abraham, which it covers, is one of the sights which only a very few Christian eyes have seen. It is permitted to none but Mohammedans to approach nearer the entrance to it than the seventh step of the lane, or staircase, alongside its eastern wall. There is a hole in that wall which is supposed to communicate with the cave below. Jews write letters to Abraham, and place them in this hole, to tell him how badly they are being treated by the Moslems. But the Moslem boys are said to know that the hole has no great depth, and to collect these letters and burn them before Abraham has seen them. That tomb is the very

heart and black centre of the Shadow of Death in Palestine.

There is no part of man's faith in which it is more necessary to be thorough-going than in his thoughts about immortality. Egypt and Greece furnish examples of great significance here. Egypt held an elaborate doctrine of the future life, and it dominated all her thought concerning this life. Men built their tombs and kings their pyramids as the most important of their life's achievements. The earthly house of the Egyptian was but an inn where he spent a little time in passing; his tomb was his eternal house and real home. Thus the tombs were glorified copies of the dwelling-houses, either of the present, or more often of a former generation.[1] Greece, on the other hand, did not believe in a life beyond the grave. Her funeral celebrations were full of lamentation, and her inscriptions sound sad enough to us. But it was a principle with Greece and Rome to decorate tombs exclusively with glad symbols such as sculptured flowers and even dances.[2] The point to be observed about these is that neither of them was morbid. Morbidness appears to avoid a robust faith or a frank scepticism,[3] and to cling about the thought which is neither sure of one thing nor another.

Israel's position in regard to the belief in immortality

[1] Cf. *The Dawn of Art*, Martin Conway, p. 95, etc.; *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius*, Professor Butcher, p. 30.

[2] Cf. *Rationalism in Europe*, Leckie, ii. 197.

[3] Cf. the sprightly figure of Glaucon in Plato's *Republic*, B, x. § 9: "Do you know," says Socrates, "that our soul is immortal and never dies?" "By Jove, I do not," replies Glaucon. "Are you prepared to prove that it is?"



STUDY FOR HOLIDAY DRESS OF
SYRIAN WOMEN





is extremely difficult to define. It was obviously with her a thing of gradual development, as her revelation opened its broadening light upon life's problems. He would be a bold critic who would sum up the situation of Isaiah's time as Renan does in the statement, "not looking beyond the world for reward and punishment," the Hebrew life "has a heroic tension, a sustained cry, an unceasing attention to the events of the world." Everything goes to shew that long before the faith in immortality had grasped the imagination and the belief of the people in general it had been revealed to chosen spirits As for the others, it had been working its way among them, occupying their minds in speculation, and leading them, as it were, among the shades of the nether world. There was something in the genius of the nation which rendered this interest in death quite inevitable. The natural bearing of the people has a strange solemnity about it, which finds constant expression in pose and gesture, and often strikes the stranger with sudden vividness. Women may be often seen, especially when clad in thin white garments on holidays, who might stand just as you see them as models for monumental sculpture. Along with all its activities, there is a distinct sympathy with death in the genius of Israel.

This phenomenon is, of course, due to very complex causes. It is a deep-rooted Semitic instinct, which seems to be not altogether unlike that of the Egyptian feeling to the tomb as the real home. Some parts of Arabia are very rich in sacred tombs and spots of holy ground, and pilgrimages are made to these both by

Moslems and by Jews. Long strings of mules, laden with coffins, wend their way to such sacred places as Nejf, and thousands of corpses are sent thither even from India.[1] Old tombstones are held in peculiar veneration by the more devout Arabs. The well-known reverence with which the Syrian Jews regard the tombs of their ancestors may be in part explained on the ground of patriotic loyalty. Such scenes as those which may be witnessed at the tomb of Rachel, remind us that a sense of the pathos of human life and its mortality is also developed strongly and enters as a very real factor into the spirit of Syria.[2] Nor can there be any doubt that a certain moral or didactic use of death is also characteristic of the East, such as is expressed in the sententious rhymes of old graveyards in this country. The reader will recall the famous instance of this, which Sir Walter Scott has made familiar—the shroud which served for the banner of Saladin, with its inscription, "Saladin must die."[3]

If, however, such elements have entered into earlier thoughts of death, it is to be feared that Palestine of the present day has little of them left. The great light of Christ illuminated the sepulchres of Christian Syria ; but with the Mohammedan conquest darkness fell again, and all the morbid fascination of the grave reasserted itself. There is little reverence for the ordinary man's place of burial now, whether it be of

[1] *Arabia, the Cradle of Islam*, Zwemer, xiii.

[2] The rags which are hung on trees or fences near certain tombs suggest the medicinal value of holy places, which attracts men to them from selfish interests.

[3] *Talisman*, xxviii.

ancient or of recent date. Dr. Merrill tells how he has found Arabs actually stealing graves, *i.e.* clearing out old ones to make room for a newly-deceased body, on the plea that "the dead man who was buried there could not possibly want his grave any longer."[1] On many a hillside the rock tombs are rent and split, like pictures from Dante's *Inferno*, where they have been blasted open with gunpowder in the search for treasure; and sometimes parties of natives may be seen prowling about a hillside on that business. The find may consist of glass bracelets, which have to be taken from the bone of a baby's arm, or gold ear-rings beside the skull whose face was once fair; but they excite no emotion except that of money values. Laurence Oliphant had

[1] *East of the Jordan*, Dr. Merrill, p. 496.

Colonel Wilson, R.E., in his *Picturesque Palestine*, p. 214, gives the following version of a story which is variously told to most travellers in Palestine: "Many Moslem shrines are of doubtful authenticity. The Arabs delight to tell the story of one, Sheikh Mohammed, who was the keeper of a weli of eminent sanctity, the tomb of a noted saint. Pilgrims thronged to it from every side, and Mohammed grew rich from their costly offerings. At length his servant Ali, dissatisfied with his meagre share of the revenue, ran away to the east of the Jordan, taking his master's donkey. The donkey died on the road, and Ali, having covered his body with a heap of stones, sat down in despair. A passer-by asked him why he sat thus in lonely grief. He replied that he had found the tomb of an eminent saint. The man kissed the stones, and giving Ali a present, passed on. The news of the holy weli spread through the land. Pilgrims thronged to Ali, who soon grew rich, built a fair kubbeh, or dome, and was the envy of all the Sheikhs. Mohammed, hearing of the new weli, and finding his own quite eclipsed by its growing popularity, made a pilgrimage to it, in hopes of ascertaining the source of its great repute. On finding Ali in charge, he whispered to him, and asked the name of the saint whose tomb he had in charge. Ali said, 'I will tell you on condition that you tell me the name of your saint.' Mohammed consenting, Ali whispered, 'God alone is great; this is the tomb of the donkey I stole from you.' 'Mashallah,' said Mohammed, 'and my weli is the tomb of that donkey's father!' It is a curious psychological fact, that although the Syrians are generally extremely credulous, they delight in stories which make credulity ridiculous."

difficulty in restraining the natives who searched with him from smashing the cinerary urns they found, on the plea that "they are so very old that they are not worth anything."

With the decay of reverence for the dead, however, there seems to have been a recrudescence of that morbid and charnel-house interest in death which marks the spirit of the land. At times one is shocked by the apparently total indifference displayed—houses being built close to the mouths of graves or even, it is said, upon the roofs of them. Yet any one who has seen a festival at a holy tomb, whether Jewish or Mohammedan, must have realised the strong attraction by which death and the grave draw men. A curious instance of this is that of the "Jews' Burning" at Tiberias.

Tiberias has been a Jewish centre since the time of Vespasian. Before that time, Jews avoided the city, because in building it Herod had disturbed a burial-place. To-day, by a strange coincidence, it is a tomb that gives it its special popularity for the Jews—the grave of the famous Rabbi Meir. Conveniently near the tomb there are large baths, whose warm and sulphurous water is considered highly medicinal. At this tomb a curious spectacle may be seen on the second day of May each year. Jewish pilgrims from near and far assemble, bringing with them their oldest garments, which are immersed in a great cauldron of oil, and then piled up and burned. The honour of setting fire to the pile is sold to the highest bidder, and the sum paid reaches £15 or more.

The same fascination of death, seen as it were past a



THE MOSQUE AT TIBERIAS AND THE LAKE OF GALILEE

The hills in light over the dark-green lake, which is in shadow, are on the eastern shore. The hour is near sunset, when the inhabitants of Tiberias are enjoying the cool breeze blowing from the west, the force of which is shewn by the movement of the branches of the palm trees.





byplay of irreverence and grotesqueness, is felt in the burial customs as they are seen to-day. At the Moslem funerals we saw there was no appearance of mourning. The men were dressed in gay colours, and they trotted along behind the corpse talking and gesticulating with an apparent gusto. It may have been the unusual appearance of the thing which impressed strangers more powerfully than natives; but to us it seemed that the realism of death was here in more crude and aggressive consciousness than in Western funerals. The corpse lay on a board, shoulder-high, with a gorgeous crimson and purple pall covering his body and limbs instead of a coffin. The head, wrapped tight in a napkin, rested on a pillow, and the features of the face stood prominently out against the sky. The man seemed, in an altogether gruesome way, to be *attending* his own funeral, and to be thrusting the fact of his presence on the spectators.

This may be subjective criticism, and it is always unfair to judge the burial-customs of other peoples without intimate knowledge of their origin and inner meaning. In one respect, however, it is certain enough that the Shadow of Death rests upon the land of Syria. That is Fatalism. We have all heard of the fatalism of the East; and strange stories have become familiar, of soldiers selling cartridges to their enemies, of villagers refusing to drain the swamp that was decimating them by its malaria, or even to desist from poisoning their own springs with foul water. "It is Allah!" ends all questioning and checks all energy. Yet the constant

recurrence of living instances of fatalism shock the traveller, however well he was prepared for them. The author asked a Mohammedan in Damascus what they had done to the workman who upset his brazier and burned the great mosque. "Oh nothing," said he, "what should we do?" "I should have thought you might have killed him." "No," he replied; "in the West you say when such things happen, 'It is the devil'; in the East we say, 'It is God!'" Still more impressive was a conversation with one of the camp-servants during a long ride near Jezreel. He had told the pathetic story of his life—how they had lived comfortably till the father died, leaving no money; then came work, begun too early and with no providence and little hope of success, until it had come to be "eat, drink, sleep, then again, eat, drink, sleep—then die and sleep, no more eat nor drink." The Syrian character of the present day has been well expressed on its negative side in three traits. These are, want of concentration, want of will-power, and an absolute want of the sense of sin. Of sin they literally do not understand the meaning, the substitute for conscience being a dread of the opinion of friends and of the public. They do not think about the problem of evil as in any sense a practical problem. "The Lord said unto Ahriman, I know why I have made thee, but thou knowest not"—that is their philosophy of the moral mystery of things. Conder sums up the situation in striking words: "Christian villages thrive and grow, while the Moslem ones fall into decay; and this difference, though due perhaps in part

to the foreign protection which the native Christians enjoy, is yet unmistakably connected with the listlessness of those who believe that no exertions of their own can make them richer or better, that an iron destiny decides all things, without reference to any personal quality higher than that of submission to fate, and that God will help those who have lost the will to help themselves."[1]

The spirit of Syria is darkened by a shadow of death that has grown not only familiar but congenial, as darkness does to all who choose it rather than the light. Strange that Syria should thus have "made a covenant with death," she from whom shone forth once the Light of the World. But that was long ago. These many centuries this has been one of that sad multitude of nations and of individuals who have sent forth a spirit that has inspired and moved the world, and who yet themselves sit desolate and listless.

[1] *Tent Work*, p. 314.

CHAPTER III

THE SPECTRAL

THE shadow of death is always haunted. A strong and pure faith peoples it with angels, and is accompanied through its darkness by that Good Shepherd whose rod and staff comfort the soul. When the faith is neither strong nor pure, and when those who sit in darkness have been disloyal to their faith, it is haunted by spectres, and its darkness becomes poisonous. The fascination of the marvellous passes into "what French writers call the *macabre*—that species of almost insane preoccupation with our mouldering flesh, that luxury of disgust in gazing on corruption."[1] This unclean spectral element is a very real part of the spirit of Syria.

The spell of the East is proverbial, and it is a more literal fact than is sometimes realised. Even such a commonsense Englishman as the captain of the *Rob Roy* confesses to a nameless fear that came upon him in the solitudes of the upper Jordan.[2] There is a well-known passage in *Eothen*, where Kinglake describes the

[1] *Marius the Epicurean*, Walter Pater, i. 44.
[2] *Rob Roy on the Jordan*, p. 260.

calculating merchant, the inquisitive traveller, the wakeful post-captain all coming under the spell of Asia.[1] The warmth and strangeness of the land may have something to do with it ; but the associations and the prevalent tone of thought have more. Every one feels it whose imagination and heart are in the least measure open to spiritual impressions.

To analyse it or to specify the causes which have produced it were an impossible task. Three things have to do with it very specially. There is the habit of the Eastern mind in dealing with matters of fact. Truth is not to the Oriental the primary moral necessity which it is to the West. Vividness and forcefulness of presentation count for at least as much. The Arab story-teller is said to close his enumeration of various legends with the sacramental formula, "God knows best where the truth lies,"—the truth being a matter of God's responsibility, while to man is committed only responsibility for being interesting. Again, in the East, terror is a recognised force between man and man ; and the great forces of nature and the more occult forces of magic are recognised and taken as part of the natural order. Religion also has had her share in the "Great Asian Mystery." This land is, to most devout persons, altogether isolated and apart, as the place of a divine revelation such as no other part of earth has known. There is a passage in *Pseudo-Aristeas* where, describing his supposed embassy to Jerusalem, he gazes at the constant waving of the veil

[1] *Eothen*, ch. viii.

in the Temple, which screened from his view the holiest things of Israel. As it rippled and swung in the wind it seemed to tantalise the gazer with the never-fulfilled promise of a glimpse into the secret place.[1] The wistful sense of mystery in that letter gives a hint which is of extraordinary significance on this subject.

The geographical formation of the land and its strange colouring lend themselves to the spectral and the uncanny. The Dead Sea presents the most sinister landscape in the world. The opening paragraphs of Scott's *Talisman*, founded upon the description of Josephus, are certainly overdrawn, yet in truth everything conspires to produce a sense of ghostliness by these unearthly shores. A ring of "scalded hills" encircles them, and a perpetual haze lies upon their waters. Their soil is nitrous and their springs sulphurous. Blocks of asphalt lie among their shingle; and fish, dead and salted, are cast up by the waves. There is little life visible about them, whether of man or beast or bird. Here and there the tempting Apple of Sodom grows, to appearance the most luscious of fruits, but so dry that its core is combustible and is used as tinder by the Arabs. A few feet above the summer level of the sea runs an unbroken line of drift-wood washed down by winter floods and left white and sparkling with crusted salt.

Yet it was not the Dead Sea that seemed to us most unearthly, but that more famous lake of which one thinks so differently. It would be a curious and instructive

[1] Cf. *Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes*, Schürer, ii. 819, 820.



THE WESTERN SHORE OF THE DEAD SEA

The mountains in the background are the Judean hills bounding the Plain of Jericho on the western side. The lower point of the spur to the left is the Mount of Temptation, behind which flows the Brook Cherith. At the foot of the mountain to the left is seen a portion of the luxuriant Plain of Jericho. The broken ridge of white hillocks running across the picture to the right marks the ancient limit of the Dead Sea in that direction.

In the foreground are pieces of timber washed down by the floods of the Jordan. Morning light.





task to collect the various impressions which the Sea of Galilee has made upon travellers. Romance and piety conspire to furnish many of its visitors with a predisposition to find it surpassingly beautiful; and not a little could be quoted which owes most of its touches to the imagination of the writer. A natural rebellion against this has led to no less exaggerated expressions of disappointment, and to accusations of ugliness which are simply untrue. The fact is that ordinary canons of description are of no avail here. The Sea of Galilee, even so far as natural appearance goes, must be judged by itself.

Journeying to it from Tabor, you ride across a rather characterless tract of country. A jackal, a stray Circassian horseman, a low black tent of the Bedawin, are the only signs of life. Suddenly the track, sweeping up over the farther side of a shallow and rudely cultivated valley, lands you on an unexpected edge, from which the ground falls sheer away before you into the basin of the lake. This is not scenery; it is tinted sculpture, it is jewel-work on a gigantic scale. The rosy flush of sunset was on it when we caught the first glimpse. At our feet lay a great flesh-coloured cup full of blue liquor; or rather the whole seemed some lapidary's quaint fancy in pink marble and blue-stone. There was no translucency, but an aggressive opaqueness, in sea and shore alike. The dry atmosphere showed everything in sharpest outline, clear-cut and broken-edged. There was no shading or variety of colour, but a strong and unsoftened contrast. To be

quite accurate, there was one break—a splash of white, with the green suggestion of trees and grass, lying on the water's edge directly beneath us—Tiberias.

When, next day, we sailed upon the lake, coasting along the western shore from north to south, we found ourselves again as far removed from anything we had seen or experienced before. A casual glance showed utter and abject desolation, and a silence that might be heard oppressed the spirit. As the eye grew more accustomed, villages were discerned. But what villages! With the same exception of Tiberias, they were brown slabs of flat-roofed cubical hovels—let into the slope of the shore or the foot-hills. And as we skirted closer along the beach, we descried everywhere traces of ruined architecture. It appeared to form a continuous ring of towers; columns broken and tumbled, but showing elaborately carved capitals; aqueducts and retaining walls; fragments of all sorts, and apparently of widely different styles of architecture. Foliage is scanty, save for the thorn-trees and bamboo canes in which the carved stones are often half buried. Here and there a plantation of orchard trees hides a trim little German garden. At Tiberias a few palm trees lend their graceful suggestion of the Far East.

All this impresses one in a quite unique way. You try to reconstruct the past—rebuild the castles and synagogues and palaces, and imagine the life that sent forth its fleets upon the lake in the days of Jesus. Or you more daringly attempt the future landscape, and imagine these hillsides as scientific cultivation and the



THE JUDEAN DESERT AND THE DEAD SEA FROM THE HIGHEST POINT OF THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

In the distance, passing right across the view, are the Mountains of Moab; at the foot of which stretches the line of the dark waters of the Dead Sea, broken at intervals by the sharp points of the hills on the western shore.

The nearer hills in the foreground are part of the Mount of Olives. The hills lying at the lower level in the middle distance are part of the Judean hills. Some idea may be formed of the clearness of the Syrian atmosphere when it is remembered that the farther shore of the Dead Sea is nearly forty miles from the point of view selected, on the Mount of Olives.





withdrawal of oppressive government may yet make them. But from it all you are driven back upon the extraordinary present—petrified, uncanny, spectral—a part of the earth on which some spell has fallen, and over which some ghostly influence broods, silencing the daylight, and whispering in the darkness. If, however, this sense of the ghostly be intenser here than elsewhere, it is but an exaggeration of the spirit of the whole land.

Nature in Syria seems always to have something of the supernatural about her. Not only in the petrifactions of the Lejja and the silent stone cities east of Jordan is this the case. The whole country offers you stones when you ask for trees, and that mere fact of its stoniness is enough to lend it the air of another world. As an indirect consequence trees, when they are found, assume a factitious importance, and a supernatural significance either for good or evil. Some of the fairest plants of Syria are treacherous as they are fair. One of our company, in gathering sprays of a peculiarly lovely creeper, somewhat resembling a white passion-flower, had his hand wounded with invisible but virulent needles which caused it to swell and gave great pain. The green spots, where grass and trees abound, tempt the unwary to drink and rest in them. But they are the most dangerous places in the land, and some of them are deadly from malaria. On the other hand, a tree in a treeless country is an object of preciousness inconceivable by any who have not come upon it from the wilderness. In the distance it beckons the

traveller with the promise of shade and water. Arrived beneath its branches, life takes on a new aspect ; kindly voices are heard in the rustle of its leaves, and gracious gifts seen in its shadow and its fruit. It is said that our fleur-de-lis pattern, often supposed to represent the flower of the lily or the iris, is really an Eastern symbol. The central stem is the sacred date-palm, while the side-lines and the horizontal band stand for ox-horns tied to the stem to avert the evil eye. It is no wonder if by the ancient Semites trees were regarded as demoniac beings, or as growing from the body of a buried god.[1] Such traditions are no longer to be found in their ancient forms, but they linger in a vague sense of the holiness of conspicuous trees, which may be seen covered with rags of clothing hung on them by natives. A like play of imagination has from time immemorial haunted the pools—especially those whose dark waters made them seem bottomless—with holy or unholy mystery. Still more terrible is the superstitious dread with which the natives regard undrained morasses. The Serbonian Bog on the south coast has from of old been regarded with special fear, owing to its treacherous appearance of sound earth. The marsh in which the Abana loses itself shares with the Serbonian Bog its grim distinction, chiefly on account of its deep black wells, which the natives take to be man-devouring whirlpools.

In her grander and more impressive features, Nature is in Syria constantly suggestive of the play of occult powers. Earthquake has left its mark in many a split

[1] Cf. *The Semites*, W. Robertson Smith, iii. v.

rampart and broken tower, and that of itself is enough to give a peculiarly ghostly tinge to the spirit of any land. The unspeakable loneliness of the desert has its own magic—a melancholy spell which has no parallel in other lands. In the desert, too, the sky conspires with the earth in its bewitchment. The mirage has power to arrest and overawe the spirit with something of the same sense of helplessness as that felt in earthquake. In the one case earth, in the other heaven, are turning ordinary procedure upside down, and the bewildered mortal knows not what is to come next upon him. The author has had experience of both, though with an interval of several years between them. The mirage he saw to the east of the Great Haj Road in Hauran. For some time the rocky hills of the Lejja had been the horizon, shimmering dimly through the heat-haze. Suddenly, on looking up, he was amazed to find that the hills had disappeared, and in their place had come a long string of camels on the sky-line, with an island, a lake, and a grove of palm-trees floating in the air above them. The sudden apparition recalled on the instant a day in the Antipodes when he felt, though at a great distance, the tremble of the New Zealand earthquakes. Either experience is unearthly enough to explain many superstitions.

In most lands the sea would have yielded a larger crop of unearthly imaginations than has been the case in Palestine. For reasons which have been already stated, Israel kept out of touch with the ocean. Yet, all the more on that account, it is the case that almost

every thought she has of the sea is fearsome. Its immensity bewilders her with the unhomely distances of the world, and the four winds strive savagely upon it. The roar and surge of the shore are all she needs to remember in order to impress herself with its terror. Now and then she thinks of the Great Deep, and of its horrible inhabitants—leviathan unwieldily sporting there, and other nameless monsters bred of the slime and ooze, and the dead men who are waiting to float up from their places to the Great Judgment, when their time shall come.

Mention of the Great Deep reminds us of yet another prolific source of the spectral element in Syrian thought. It was but natural that the sound of underground rivers and their explanation by the theory of a world founded on bottomless floods (the "waters underneath the earth"), should have given to the whole land an air of possession by ghostly powers. It may have been that same phenomenon which drew down the imagination of Syria to the subterranean regions, or it may also have been to some extent the hereditary greed of buried treasure, which every nation whose buildings have been often overturned is likely to acquire. Whatever be its explanation, the fact is certain that the underground element is one which counts for much in the spirit of Syria. Alike in Christian and in pre-Christian times there seems to have been a most unwholesome dread of fresh air blowing about holy things. Sacred caves and pits were among the most characteristic properties of ancient



ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, WHERE THE DISCIPLES SLEPT DURING THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN





Semitic religion.[1] As for Christian tradition, it seems positively to dread the open air. The Nativity in Bethlehem and the Agony in Gethsemane have each their cave assigned to them, and many another site has a cave either discovered or actually constructed for its commemoration. Nature and history have combined to encourage the underground tendency. Palestine is remarkable for the number and size of its natural caverns, and it is not slow to add its imaginative touch to the length of them, connecting distant towns with supposed subterranean passages. These caves have been used as dwelling-places from very ancient times. The strange cities of Edom and of Bashan are well known to all as wonders. And not in these places only, but in many other parts of the land, men have dwelt beneath the ground. In times of invasion, for the solitude of hermit life, and in the terrors of persecution, caves have offered natural places of refuge and of hiding, which have in many cases been greatly enlarged by excavation. Besides those caverns whose interest lies in the memory of ancient inhabitants, there are some of an interest whose terror is not yet departed. These are the cave-dwellings of lunatics, who in former times often chose the dead for company and inhabited tombs. Now, in some places they are chained in black recesses of mountain caverns, where their life must be horrible indeed. There are also one or two caves in Syria which end in sudden perpendicular shafts of great depth, where adulteresses are said to meet their fate. Such

[1] Cf. *The Semites*, W. Robertson Smith, pp. 197, etc.

modern instances may have reinforced the natural fascination of the occult which subterranean places offer. But there is something congenial to it in the spirit of Syria quite apart from these.

If the natural features of Syria thus tempt men towards the ghastly side of things, her history suggests plenty of material for superstition to work upon. If the legend were true that no dew nor rain would moisten the spot where a man had been murdered, Syria would be no longer an oasis, but the driest of deserts. In a spiritual sense the legend is truer than it seems. When, in his *Laughing Mill*, Julian Hawthorne works out the idea of a mystic sympathy in Nature with crimes that have been done by man, he is reminding us of something which every one of sensitive spirit has more or less clearly felt. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's subtler tales the same idea is worked out in a fashion still more convincing. There are times and places when it is difficult to resist the conviction that the material world, in its dumb, unconscious way, is yet burdened with the weight of man's evil deeds. In Syria one can almost hear "the groaning and travailing of the whole creation." It seems to be a land waiting the hour of its release, and meanwhile shrouded in deeper mystery than any other land. Something has happened here, you feel, which never happened elsewhere ; something is going to happen here again, when the time shall come.

Nothing could better attest this fact than the extraordinary wealth of legend in Syria. Fragments of

Bible story, changed and often distorted by those who have retold them, are met with every day. Sometimes a story has passed from Jews to Christians and from Christians to Mohammedans, increasing steadily in marvellousness and decreasing in verisimilitude as it passed. Samson, Goliath, and the prophet Jonah are notable cases in point. A Mohammedan weli marks the spot where the latter was thrown ashore; but the inventors of this legend have been inconsiderate. The weli stands at the bend of a shallow sandy beach, where the whale must either have itself come ashore to deposit the prophet, or have projected him a distance of at least a hundred yards. A very curious instance of a similar kind is that of the fall of Jericho as narrated in Joshua vi. Conder gives two legends, both of which are obviously elaborated forms of that account. One of these is a Samaritan story of iron walls, and the other a Mohammedan one of a city of brass whose walls fell after Aly, the son-in-law of Mohammed, had ridden seven times round them.[1] Still more curious is a legend related by the same author, which looks like a Mohammedan version of the Wandering Jew. It tells how, at Abila, Cain was allowed to lay down the corpse of his brother Abel after carrying it for a hundred years. The whole story of the Herods has infested the region of their crimes with the ghosts of their victims. In Samaria the murdered Mariamne still seems to dwell in her honey, and Herod and his servants to call her by name and force the pretence that

[1] *Tent Work*, pp. 68, 204.

she is yet alive. The land is sick with ancient crimes whose blood "crieth from the ground."

The religions of the land seem to be in league with the powers of darkness for the propagation of magic lore. It is an extraordinary fact that Syria has sent forth to the ends of the earth a religion that is the Eternal Word of God to mankind, and yet herself has reverted to the religious conceptions of ancient Semitic paganism. One of the most fundamental of these conceptions was that of a religion whose essential element is not belief but ritual.[1] While in the West the free play of reason has tested and interpreted Israel's faith, and discovered in it the unique revelation of the living God to man, the worshippers in the Holy Land itself seem to treat that same faith wholly as a department of magic lore. Certain rites have to be performed, no matter how unintelligently, and that is all. All creeds alike share the blame of this. Druse and Samaritan, Jew, Christian, and Mohammedan vie with one another to-day in the poor ambition of making the religion of Jehovah contemptible in the eyes of thinking men who investigate it as it is practised on its native soil.

Much of the magic of the East is decadent or decayed religion. On rare occasions a marriage superstition may be met with, such as the foretelling of marriage destinies by tying green twigs with one hand,[2] which appears to be the creation of pure romance.

[1] Cf. *The Semites*, Robertson Smith, pp. 16, 17

[2] *East of the Jordan*, Merrill, p. 193.



THE VALLEY OF HINNOM WITH THE HILL OF OFFENCE

The upper portion of the picture to the left is the Hill of Offence, with the village of Siloam on its lower slopes. Behind it is the range of the Judean hills, bounded above by the level outline of the mountains of Moab. The olive-clad foreground is formed by the southern side of Mount Zion, over which is seen the scarped cliff of the sides of the Hill of Evil Council, shewing the site of Aceldama (the Field of Blood) covered with tombs. The well of *En Rogel* (Fuller's Spring), mentioned in Joshua xv. 7, is seen below the white road leading up to the monastery in the centre of the landscape.





But the great majority of those superstitions which hold the Eastern mind in bondage are evidently relics of pagan thought incorporated now in Jewish, Christian, or Moslem creeds, and absorbing all the interest of those who believe in them. If a Mohammedan saint's bones flew through the air from Damascus to Mount Ebal, the Christians can match the miracle and more, for was not the very house of the Virgin carried off by angels from Nazareth to Loreto lest the Moslems should desecrate it? Magic dominates the mind of the East and explains everything there to this day. Every inscribed stone runs the chance either of being honoured by a place in the wall of a dwelling or of being heated with fire and split with water, according to the sort of magic it is supposed to represent. It is difficult to realise that the men you converse with are actually living in the world of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, where a dealer in black art, by his incantation,

> unbinds the demons of the deep to do
> Deeds without name, or chains them in his cell,
> And makes e'en Pluto pale upon the throne of hell.

Yet such is undoubtedly the case. Even the saddle-bags you buy at Jerusalem—those gorgeous labyrinths of shells and tassels—have a blue bead concealed somewhere in them to return the stare of any evil eye that may look upon your horse. To avert the same danger you will see little boys dressed in girls' clothes, and specially pretty children kept dirty and untidy. Lest the dreaded eye should blight the fortunes of a new-born babe the Jewish Rabbis sometimes hang up the

121st Psalm on the wall over mother and child. Magic is as useful a substitute for science as it is for religion. It explains any phenomenon and clears up any mystery without the trouble of investigation. All great buildings must have been built by enchantment, so what is the use of speculating as to their architecture? Western civilisation is, no doubt, a remarkable affair, but it never occurs to an unsophisticated Syrian that it is a matter for energetic emulation. The Frank has only been lucky enough to learn the proper spell. It is easy to see how Syria, with such views as these, is doomed at once to moral and intellectual stagnation.

The vivid mind of the East is fertile in poetic imagination. Restless and quick itself, it cannot conceive the Universe otherwise than as living around it. Everything is alive and aware. All inanimate things are personified; or, to speak more accurately, they are inhabited by spiritual beings. Natural phenomena express the purposes of minds hidden behind them. Every dangerous or adverse experience is regarded as the work of malice. Human life is beset with ambushed spiritual enemies. The advantage which their invisibility gives to these over the human combatants would be enough to put fighting out of the question, were it not that so many of the spirits are of feeble intelligence and may be hoodwinked; while all of them have other spirits for their enemies who may be enlisted on man's side against them. These spirits are of many kinds, but they may be classed in two groups, according to their connection with natural phenomena or with death.

Chief of the former group are the angels, good and bad; and the jinn, or genii, whom Islam took over from the ancient paganism of Arabia. The angels are God's attendants, and have some functions entirely independent of natural phenomena. Thus the two stones which mark a Moslem's grave show the stations of the angels who are to examine him; and the tuft of hair on his shaven head is (like the Jewish sidelocks) to enable the Angel Gabriel to bear the man to heaven. Yet the angels are in many instances personified parts of nature, guardians of the land, spirits of wind or fire or water, who are obviously the descendants and the heirs of the ancient local gods.[1] Thus the wicked angels are supposed to have descended on Mount Hermon, and to have sworn their oaths there—a belief which adds considerably to the importance of the great mountain in Syrian estimation. The jinn are the demons of the desert, lordly and terrible to all who have not the charm which masters them, obedient as little children to those who have it. They are the inhabitants of those whirling sandstorms which sweep across the waste. Some superstitions of this kind may be connected with the former dangers from wild beasts, which used to haunt the jungles of lower Jordan and swarm up to the inland territories after an invasion had depopulated them. Even now there may be seen in

[1] The early Christian belief that the gods of paganism were demons has died hard, if indeed it be quite dead. The "weird horsemen" who in windy nights are to be heard galloping down lonely valleys lead us back to that interesting custom by which a horse was actually provided in some of the temples of the Syrian Herakles, so that the god might ride forth at night.

Palestine an occasional wolf or leopard, to say nothing of the jackals which every traveller is sure to see. Some of the fauna of Palestine are in themselves so strange as to suggest unearthly affinities. The jerboa, for instance, the jumping mouse of the desert, merits Browning's description of him, when in *Saul* he says, "there are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half mouse." The lizards, too, seem anything but ordinary respectable law-abiding animals as they twinkle to and fro among the ruins of old buildings. It is said that Mohammed refused to eat lizards, considering that they were the metamorphosed spirits of Israelites.

The spirits that haunt sepulchres are either ghosts of the dead or ghouls that prey upon their flesh. It is this class of apparition which appears to have the strongest fascination for the Syrian mind; and its graveyard lore is the natural sequel to the morbid interest in death which formed the subject of our preceding chapter. Conder, whose book gives much interesting information on this whole subject, found it difficult to keep any Arabs about him at Fusâil, a few miles north of Jericho, because of their fear of a ghoul in the ruins, who might chance to desire a change of food were he to see them there. The dead appear to have undergone a change for the worse in dying. The utmost caution and politeness are required to prevent their ghosts from doing harm to the visitors at their tombs, even in the case of men who, while in the body, were hospitable and friendly persons. Some localities are regarded as peculiarly dangerous, among



THE ROCK-CUT TOMBS OF THE VALLEY OF JEHOSHAPHAT

These tombs are on the eastern side of the valley facing the East Wall of the Temple Area. The upper road passing over the bridge (the lower bridge of the Kidron) leads to Jerusalem by the Gate of the Moghrebins. The road down which the camel is led goes to Siloam. The first monolith surmounted by a pyramid is the Tomb of Zechariah, according to the Jews the prophet mentioned in the Second Book of Chronicles, but according to the Christians the Zacharias of St. Matthew's Gospel. The opening, with an architrave supported by two Doric columns, is the so-called Grotto of St. James. The trumpet-shaped top of the Tomb of Absalom, called by the Arabs the Cap of Pharaoh, appears to the left. Jewish tombs cover the whole of the sloping rock in shadow. The last gleam of the setting sun lights the vertical wall of rock.





which is the reputed site of the stoning of Stephen and (according to Gordon) of Calvary, near Jerusalem. An Arab writer of the Middle Ages advises the traveller not to pass that haunted spot at night.[1]

If, under ordinary conditions, life in Syria is overshadowed and haunted, the dread becomes far greater when disease has come. The explanation of disease is the same easy one as that which has deadened science and distorted religion — magic again. Even when the true cause of illness has been guessed, it has to be explained in ghostly language. When plague has broken out in a locality the Jewish Rabbis make the neighbours of the stricken house empty all jars and vessels, saying that "the angel of death wipes his sword in liquids." The malaria of swamps is set down to the same cause, and it is probable that many of that mixed multitude who are to be seen sitting chin deep in the hot sulphur-springs of Gadara or Tiberias regard their cure as due to some local spirit who happens to be benevolently inclined. In the neighbourhood of the tomb of a Mohammedan saint, every accident or ailment is regarded as the work of the dead man. Indeed the main idea of Syrian medical science is that all or most sickness is possession by demons, and a common cure is to bore or burn holes in the patient's flesh, by which the evil spirit may escape. The treatment of lunacy is perhaps the saddest case in point. Until Mr. Waldmeyer built his asylum at Beyrout, there was but one mode of treat-

[1] *Haifa*, Laurence Oliphant, p. 300.

ment. At certain monasteries there are caves in which the insane are chained below huge stones, with hardly space for movement, and are kept there for days in hunger and filth, in order to drive out the devil. The test for devil-possession is somewhat crude. The patient is shewn a cross. If he turns from it and refuses to look he is possessed; if he shews no aversion to it he is only unwell and is allowed to go. In the Beyrout asylum we were told that no case of lunacy had been discovered which in any way differed from the European types of the same disease. The record of cures there, under the same treatment as that which is practised in the West, is a most encouraging and hopeful one.

It is true that the bright spirit of the East with its rapid changes and its unquenchable sparkle of gaiety, has mitigated the horror and oppressiveness of the spectral there. There are times when one would almost fancy that the whole of their superstition was a pretence which was never meant to be taken seriously. In Damascus, and probably elsewhere, you may buy little rag-dolls supposed to resemble camels. They are made of bones, covered with patches of many-coloured cloth, and tricked out with tinsel and strings of beads. We bought two of these from a young girl in "the street called Straight" for half a franc, and bore them through the city with a crowd of idlers following us. We learned afterwards that these were cunning devices to cheat the ghosts. When you are very sick or in danger you vow a camel to your saint or friendly spirit—this

is how you pay your vow. Poking fun at Hades in this fashion might seem a dangerous game, and one hardly to be recommended while any lingering belief in the reality of ghosts remained. Yet such is Syrian character. This sort of thing persists along with a deep horror of the other world. The words of Job are not in the least out of date in Palestine to-day: "Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof; an image was before mine eyes: there was silence, and I heard a voice."[1] The horror is all the deeper because it appears to be seldom brought to clear statement. The spectral world is undefined, and it has, therefore, all the added power of the unknown, whose play upon the imagination is so much more strong and subtle than that of any clear conception, however ghastly.

In this chapter no attempt has been made to distinguish between the superstitions of Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans in Palestine. As a matter of fact, there is little to choose between them, and they have much in common. It is true that every nation has some outlook or other upon the world of spirits. But each has its own way of regarding the apparitions; and the kind of spectre which a land believes in is no bad indication of the tone of the land's thought and character. About the fairy-lore of Teutonic nations there is a child-like simplicity and purity which make

[1] Job iv. 14-16.

that lore wholly refreshing and precious. The nymphs and Pan, whose ancient monuments we have seen in ancient Palestine, were graceful. But the spectral element in modern Palestine appears to be almost wholly morbid and unclean,—the further decadence of a land that has made its covenant with death. The life a Syrian peasant leads to-day is haunted by ghostly terrors ; it is a life led by leave of the dead, or by a systematic cunning which plays off one malign spirit against another, or succeeds in winning a point or two against the grave for the player. It is a view of life than which surely none can be at once more impudent and more melancholy.





WATER-CARRIER (STANDING FIGURE)





CHAPTER IV

THE LAND OF THE CROSS

It is a sad view of the spirit of Syria which the last chapters have offered, yet it is but too true. We must linger yet a little longer listening to "the sob of the land" before we turn to that which is at once the explanation and the hope of relief for its long sorrow. Apart altogether from the ghostly elements in this land of ruins, the mere melancholy is persistent and depressing as one moves from place to place. The gloom is so ominous, as to be at times suggestive of a supernatural curse that broods upon everything with its depressing weight. The khans outside of villages are in ruins; so are the bridges over streams, and the castles on the hills. Amid such scenery it is natural to remember the defeats rather than the glories of the past, and the national history seems to be one long record of misfortune. In the modern conditions of life in Palestine the long story of tears and blood seems to be continued in the haggard desolation of its present.

Two things especially must send this impression home even to the most casual observer, viz. the heart-

lessness of toil and the prevalence of disease. In every country much must always depend on the spirit in which men labour. Where the walls of its cities rise to music, as the old glad legends told of Troy and Thebes, there is hope and promise ; but here there is no song to help men's toil. It is hard and joyless, with little promise and less hope. With the death of these self-respect also dies ; and work, without incentives to anything which might tempt ambition, remains merely as a hard necessity and a curse. One scene remains with us, in which this aspect of life was brought home with a pathos which recalled the words of the evangelist about Christ's compassion for the multitude. We were encamped at Jericho, and all through the terrible heat of a long afternoon there trooped past our tents a procession of peasants. They were labourers going down from their homes in the hill-country to reap the fields of proprietors on the east side of Jordan. They filed slowly past in families—men, women, and children, walking wearily on into the burning plain of Jordan. They carried with them their household goods—pots, cradles, and a few other articles. As they passed by, without stopping to look into the tents, their dreary tramp spoke volumes to any heart that knew how blithesome labour may be where its conditions are kindly or even tolerable.

Next to its heartless toil the uncured sickness of the land contributes to the deep sadness of its spirit. Disease seems to stare you everywhere in the face. Superstition and fatalism combined have blocked all progress in



ANCIENT HAND-MILL AT MOUNT TABOR


Hand
mill at Mt Tabor.
24: June 1901



medical science. The people are naturally healthy; and their strong constitutions, kept firm by plain living, yield to medical treatment in a marvellous way. But when any serious accident has happened, or any dangerous disease infected them, they are utterly helpless, and things take their course. The medicinal springs form an exception to this rule, and seem to be the one real healing agency in the country. Their bluish waters bubble with sulphuretted hydrogen, and smell abominably, but they cure sicknesses of some kinds. For other diseases there is no native cure. Those which are most in evidence are ulcers and inflammatory diseases of the eyes. The natives appear to be immune so far as malaria is concerned; but a peculiar kind of decline is not uncommon, in which the emaciation is so great as to reduce the patient to the appearance of a skeleton, with great lustrous eyes. It need hardly be said that the characteristic disease of Syria is leprosy. The first object which attracts the eye after you arrive at the railway station of Jerusalem is an immense leper hospital. In a case which created some sensation lately in the south of England, it turned out that a fraudulent Syrian had been raising money for a non-existent hospital at Tirzah, which was to accommodate eleven thousand lepers. Of course the figure was a monstrous one, but the fact that it was invented shews how terrible a scourge this is. It is a curious circumstance that the inhabitants of towns do not contract leprosy. It appears in villages, and the sufferers are at once driven out, to wander to the larger towns, outside

of which they settle in communities or beg by the wayside. The view of the north-east end of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives shews a roadside which is always dotted with these pitiable folk. For many travellers this is the road of their first journey from the city, leading over Olivet to Bethany, and they are not likely to forget that ride. Lepers, in all stages of hideous decay, line the roadside; real or sham paralytics sprawl and shake in the middle of the path, so that the horses have actually to pick their way among the bodies of them. The epileptics appear to be frauds. Their faces are covered, but they see what is going on well enough to stop shaking when the horses have passed. The leprosy is all too real. Arms covered with putrid sores, hands from which the fingers have one after another fallen off, and husky voices begging from throats already half eaten out—these cannot be imitated.

As to the causes of Syrian disease, and leprosy in particular, there seems to be much obscurity. Perhaps the word that comes nearest to an explanation is uncleanness, and the promise of "a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness" may have a physical as well as a spiritual significance. The land is incredibly contaminated with filth, as the following quotation shews: "Sir Charles Warren tells us that the soil in which he made some of his excavations was so saturated with disease germs that his workmen were often attacked with fever, especially if they had any sore or scratch on their hands." [1]

[1] *The Cradle of Christianity*, D. M. Ross, p. 60.



THE NORTH-EAST END OF JERUSALEM AND MIZPAH FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

The mountain above the city to the north, with mosque and minaret on its summit, is the point from which the Crusaders had their first view of Jerusalem, and was hence called Mons Gaudii, or Mountain of Joy.

The road following the direction of the wall of the city leads down to the bridge, one side of which is seen below near the cypresses of Gethsemane. This bridge spans the valley of the Upper Kidron. The rocks at the turn of the road, above the bridge to the left, are the traditional site of the stoning of St. Stephen. The Church of the Tomb of the Virgin is behind the taller of the two cypresses in the foreground, which stand near the spot where Christ is said to have wept over Jerusalem. Morning light.





It would be hard to find words more significant than these.

For this state of matters, and for its continuance from generation to generation, many reasons may be given. The usual explanation of the whole is the government, with its soldiers and its taxation. The wild notes of Turkish bugle-calls answering each other across Jerusalem sound harsh, and as it were blasphemous, and further travel deepens the resentment rather than removes it. When, behind all the present evils, one remembers the past, with its massacres and all its other iniquities, one's heart grows hot. One Syrian, after narrating a specially aggravated case of oppression, asked us if we knew "the story of the prophets Ananias and Sapphira." We said we had heard it; and he added, "Ah, in *those* days God punished at once; now, *God waits!*" Dr. Thomson somewhere quotes a proverb to the effect that, "Wherever the hoof of a Turkish horse rests it leaves barrenness behind it"; and all that is seen in Syria tends to prove that saying but too true. Every possible experiment in misgovernment seems to have been made here. Frequent change of governors, underpayment of officials, conscription of the most ruinous sort, bribery, cruelty, fanaticism, laziness, sensuality, and stupidity—all are to be seen open and without pretence at concealment.

Yet in the interest of truth it ought to be remembered that there is another side to the story. The incident of the horse at Banias[1] made one understand how a Turk

[1] See p. 39.

might answer his critics, with some show of reason, that this was the only sort of government these people could understand. Of course it might be again replied that it was oppression that had brought this about. Yet it is perfectly clear that Syrian character is very far from that of martyred innocence. From whatever causes it has come about, the fact is certain that in many respects the moral sense of Palestine is as depraved as that of her oppressors. Her worst enemy is her own wickedness. Crime is taken for granted in the coolest and most complacent way. In the north of Judea there is a narrow valley called the "Robbers' Glen." Our party was too large to be in any danger there or elsewhere; but we were not prepared to find one of the robbers waiting there and smoking cigarettes with our muleteers in the most friendly fashion. He was a very tame-looking person, and yet we were assured (though with what truth it would be rash to say) that he had been in prison a hundred times for robbery. The land is so accustomed to vice of all sorts that it seems to have lost its moral sense altogether. The wickedness of sacred cities in the East is proverbial. The familiarity with sacred things, and the possession of proprietary rights in them, appears to be too much for human nature. A trifling incident, yet one which seemed significant, occurred to us at Katana. We had reached our halting-place after the day's march, and the usual crowd soon gathered round the tents. Among them was a small boy whom his mother held by the hand. Some biscuits were given him, and he was told to divide them

with the other boys and girls. The mother laughed loudly and said, with a curious pride in the saying, "He never gives." Nothing could be truer to life. It is selfishness rather than suffering that has ruined Syria.

Thus many elements enter into the desolation of the Holy Land, and make it a place of decaying body and of shiftless spirit, but of all these elements the ethical is supreme. The very look of the country suggests this. It is not merely stony; as has been cleverly said, it seems to have been *stoned*—stoned to death for its sins. The loose boulders of Judea, and the scattered ruins of old vineyard terraces and village walls, present all the appearance of flung missiles. This view of the case is acknowledged freely by the inhabitants themselves, in whose thoughts judgment has a prominent place. The buried cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are favourite subjects of reflection with disciples of all the creeds. A somewhat similar story is told of the Lake of Phiala, a volcanic mountain lake south of Hermon. Tradition tells of a village submerged below its waters "to punish the inhabitants for their inhospitable treatment of travellers," and there are many other stories of judgment in the country. Yet the judgment always falls upon some one else than the narrator of the story, who would not insult your intelligence by supposing that you thought *him* in need of judgment. Even in the familiar quotations from the litany chanted by the Jews at their Wailing-Place, the confession of sin is conspicuous by its absence. There is

sore mourning over the departed glories of the land, but the only sins confessed are those of priests and kings long dead. To all creeds alike the essential element in religion seems to be ritual performance, and the ideal life is accordingly not one of ethical character but of formal correctness. And yet in the midst of all this self-righteous complacency, any one can see that every part of the land is being judged and is bearing the punishment of sin. Jericho, squatting sordidly amid the ruins of its ancient Hellenism, looked down upon by the severe and barren mountain where Jesus hungered, is a monument of the reality of ethical distinctions as hard and practical facts. They may be ignored, but they must be reckoned with in the end.

Of the ethical significance of the fate of Palestine there cannot be a moment's doubt. It is here that the love and care of God have been met and foiled by the sin and carelessness of man. In regard to its whole moral and social life, there is one overmastering conviction which grows upon the traveller from day to day. That conviction is, that it is a land which requires and demands righteousness. Nature and man are in close touch, and each depends upon the other. It is not a desert, where no amount of labour can produce result; nor is it a luxuriant tropical country whose fruits fall ripe and untoiled for into man's hand. It demands labour, but it answers to it. The least effort of man to *be* a man and do his human work meets with immediate and generous response. Neglected plains and valleys, once rich, are now a wilderness; the most unpromising hillsides, where terracing and irrigation



THE PLAIN OF JERICHO LOOKING TOWARDS THE MOUNTAINS OF MOAB

The road in the foreground, stretching across the Plain, is that from Jerusalem to Jericho. The building in the foreground is the ruins of an oil-mill.

The Brook Cherith flows through the rocky gorge to the left of the road, roughly following its course.

The rectangular enclosure to the right of the road past the oil-mill is called the Pool of Herod. Above this, in the distance, at the foot of the mountains of Moab, is the Dead Sea. Time, early morning in May.





have kept the human side of the compact, are fertile. The labour would indeed require to be hard and unremitting. Many of the streams are so deep sunk in their channels that extraordinary enterprise would be needed to raise their waters for irrigation or to conduct them from higher levels in long conduits. Yet every remaining arch of an old aqueduct, and every water-mill whose wheel thuds round in its heavy way, shew that such enterprise is possible. Each of those grooved and checkered valleys where men with their naked feet open and close the little gates of clay, and water the fat crops of onion and tomato, shews how sure is the reward of enterprise. Similarly the terracing reminds us that soil is as precious as water. Both must be laboured for and fought for. It is the desert that naturally claims the land and sets the normal point of view for its inhabitants. Syria is an oasis by the grace of God and the toil of man.

This alone would suffice to make Palestine an ideal training-ground for a nation to learn righteousness. The whole theory of Providence which dominates the earlier Old Testament, and lingers on in popular belief through the New, is apparent on every mile of these valleys. That theory was that even in the present life the sin of man will be immediately punished by adversity, and his righteousness rewarded by prosperity. It was a theory which had to be abandoned, and the whole marvellous story of Job shews us the process of the nation's discarding it. To us it seems wonderful that it should have been able to survive at all in face of

the inexplicable and at times apparently irrational facts of all human experience. But the fact that in Syria nature's rewards and punishments are so certain and so immediate goes far to explain both its origin and its persistence.

Such thoughts as these regarding Syria inevitably lead towards one goal. There is but one symbol in the world which expresses all that depth of pain which we have found in the history of this sorely-tried land, and at the same time forces on even the most thoughtless its moral significance. That symbol is the Cross of Christ. It is still to be seen very frequently in Syria, generally in its Greek form (☦). In this form it is more impressive than in the other. The oblique lower bar represents a board nailed across the shaft for the feet of the sufferer to rest on. The realistic effect of this is surprising, for it brings home to one's imagination in a quite new way the terrible fact that men have actually been crucified.

The later history and legend of the cross in Palestine is one of singular and tragic interest. First of all there is the preposterous story of St. Helena's dream—the miraculous discovery of the three crosses, and the miracle of healing which enabled her to distinguish the cross of Christ from those of the robbers. Since then the sacred wood has been tossed about from hand to hand, hunted for, bargained for, sinned for, died for. Its presence in their army comforted the Crusaders in their misery ; the sight of

it in the hands of the Saracens filled them with despair. The restoration of it was among the chief demands conceded by Saladin when he surrendered Acre to Richard; and when he failed to deliver it, hostages to the number of 2700 were slaughtered in sight of the Saracen camp. All through the Crusades it was the badge of self-devotion to the holy wars, and a strange tale is told of an occasion on which Louis IX., presenting robes to his courtiers according to an ancient custom, had crosses secretly embroidered on them, so that the wearers found themselves committed unawares to the Crusade.

For 1500 years that symbol pointed to the site which the buildings of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre cover. Godfrey was buried there, and many a devout soul regarded it as the holiest of holy places. In the middle of the nineteenth century the question of its authenticity was raised; and General Gordon, who spent part of the last year before he went to Khartoum, in Jerusalem, championed the identification of the hill of Jeremiah's Grotto, just outside the Damascus Gate, with Calvary. His point of view was a strange one. It was suggested by the words "place of a skull," from which he developed the idea of the Holy City as the body of the bride of Christ, this hill being the head, Zion the pleura, and so on. The theory, so far as it regards Calvary, has appealed to many competent judges who were very far from adopting the mystical and emblematic views of Gordon. The hill is an old quarry, within which Jeremiah is supposed by tradition to have written his Lamentations. It is quite a little hill, whose short and scanty grass was

burnt up with drought when we saw it, leaving a surface of loose sandy soil. A man crucified here would have the Mount of Olives in his eyes behind some roof-lines of the city. By a curious coincidence a rock-hewn tomb, with a groove running in front of the face of it for a great stone which would close its entrance, has been discovered close by. It is a grave with only one loculus in it, and it is temptingly like one's idea of the Garden Tomb of Joseph ; but it is said to be undoubtedly of later date than the death of Jesus. From one point in the road, somewhat nearer the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the hollows and caves of the hill, which here breaks along its length into a small precipice, bear a striking resemblance to a chapfallen skull. Not that the features can be examined in anything like accurate detail. But in the evening, while the sun sets over Jerusalem and the shadows slowly deepen, the resemblance is sufficient to strike one who had not heard that this was the place so named. Many arguments have been urged for this new site. Its proximity to an ancient Jewish cemetery is in favour of the probability that Joseph's tomb was there. It was close to the public highway, as Calvary undoubtedly was. It is also significant that the gate now known as the Damascus Gate was formerly called St. Stephen's Gate ; and tradition affirmed that through it St. Stephen was led forth to his martyrdom. It is probable that the martyrdom took place on the public execution-ground, where, in the natural course of events, Jesus and the robbers would also have been crucified. Finally, and most important, recent explorations have dis-



THE UPPER VALLEY OF THE KIDRON LOOKING SOUTH

In the upper part of the picture to the right, behind the olive tree, we see the south-east corner of the Temple Area. The centre hill in the middle distance is the Hill of Offence, with the village of Siloam at its foot. Nearer to the spectator, above the olive gardens, is the Tomb of Absalom. The road to the extreme left, passing over the Mount of Olives, leads to Jericho. At the commencement of the road to the left is the retaining wall of the Garden of Gethsemane, with tall cypresses behind it. The slope of the hill down to the Monument of Absalom is one of the great Jewish burial-grounds. In the foreground is a man drawing water from a cistern. Time, late afternoon in May.





covered, in various parts of the city, huge Jewish stones which are believed by advocates of this theory to be those of the wall which stood there in the time of Christ. By completing the line of these stones a wall is reconstructed which encloses the traditional Church of the Holy Sepulchre, while it leaves Gordon's site still outside. To get the Holy Sepulchre outside this wall, as we know the place of the crucifixion was, it would be necessary to imagine a sharp angular recess in the wall pointing inwards, with Calvary filling the space within the arms of the angle. It matters little where the spot was. Yet it would be interesting if the north side of the city should ultimately claim Him from the west —Nazareth, as it were, from Rome. The garden and the new grave belong to an English committee of trustees endowed in 1901. It would indeed be a striking thing if, after all the idolatry of sites which the vision of St. Helena started, the real hill and garden where the world's great tragedy was enacted should prove to have gone past Roman and Greek worshippers both, and to have been committed to the hands of Protestants.[1]

No one who has stood upon that hill of Golgotha and thought of the wondrous past can have failed to perceive a mystical and dark connection between the crime which has rendered Jerusalem so famous, and all that deathly and spectral fate which has befallen

[1] Professor G. A. Smith, in his chapter on "The Walls of Jerusalem," has given the results of an exhaustive study of the most recent research on this subject, and his conclusion is that "on our present data it is hopeless to decide between the rival and contradictory arguments."—*Jerusalem*, vol. i. p. 249.

the spirit of Syria. As we stand amid the deepening shadows of sunset on the spot where Christ was crucified, a change seems to come, as the blood-red sky crimsons the minarets and domes. It is no longer Christ that hangs upon the Cross, but Palestine. No other land would have crucified Him. Had He come to Greece He might have been neglected or ridiculed, but certainly not crucified. For that it needed a religion as bitterly earnest, and at the same time as morally decayed, as Judaism was then. And that same moral and spiritual condition which set up the Cross for Jesus, has finished its course by crucifying the nation that murdered Him. Most literally this happened in the days when Titus used up all the trees near Jerusalem to make crosses for Jews. But in Sir John Mandeville's time the legend had expanded to this, that at the Crucifixion all the trees in the world withered and died. Certainly a blight came upon the land of Palestine. It has sometimes been asserted that the nation which crucified Jesus Christ can never again rise to national prosperity or greatness. The forces at work in history are far too subtle and complex to allow any one to say with assurance what the future may or may not have in store for a race. But this at least is evident, that meanwhile the Cross has marked this region for its own ; the land is everywhere on its Cross, and the obvious cause of this is the want of righteousness, both in oppressors and oppressed. It is a land that cries aloud for righteousness in its agony. We saw a ghastly sight in a town of Northern Syria, which haunts the memory with a



THE CYPRESSES OF THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

THE olives in the foreground are some of the extremely ancient trees for which the Garden is famous. It will be remembered that the word Gethsemane means oil-press. The building to the left is the chapel of the Franciscans, who have charge of the Garden.

Across the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Kidron) the prospect is terminated by part of the East Wall of the "Noble Sanctuary" (Temple Area), with the Golden Gate to the right and the dome of the Mosque of Omar.





deeper meaning than the mere incident itself could. It was a young Syrian, of typical and finely formed features, who had lost his reason. When we entered his room, he rose from his bed and flung himself back against the wall. The arms were outstretched, the head fell, and the body seemed to hang there heavily. It was done suddenly, but it flashed upon us a whole world of symbolic meaning. It is that picture that rises to the imagination when one thinks of the misery of the land—the very symbol of the crucifixion of Palestine.

CHAPTER V

RESURRECTION

In regard to the future of Palestine the outlook of different writers varies perhaps as much as upon any similar question that could be named. Every one is familiar with the Utopian dreams which optimistic constructors of programmes cherish regarding it. On the other hand, grave and thoughtful writers have sometimes felt the misery of its present state so heavily as to abandon all hope for the future, and to acknowledge the most discouraging views as to the possibilities before the land. Apart from sentiment, or from some favourite method of interpreting prophecy, the reasons for such pessimism are mainly two. One is the change of climate, which appears from many indications to be an unquestionable fact. The other is the destruction of terraces, and the consequent washing away of soil from the higher regions of the country. These are serious considerations, which cannot be ignored. If this view be the correct one, the only permanent continuance of Syria will be as a symbol of judgment, a kind of Lot's-wife pillar among the peoples, a sermon in stone upon





PLOUGHING ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES





the ethical principles which govern the fortunes of nations. The land will remain as a proverb, but will never again be a home.

Yet neither these nor any other such forebodings seem to the ordinary observer quite to be justified. If the climate has changed, may not that be due to causes that can be remedied? By proper drainage of swamps and planting of trees, it would seem perfectly possible to modify climatic conditions to an extent at least sufficient to allow the hope of prosperous agriculture and pleasant habitation. As to the terraces, if they have been constructed once they may be reconstructed with hope of result. There are tracts even in the desert itself where traces of former cultivation may still be seen. If the uncivilised or semi-barbarous tribes of the ancient time built up the land until handfuls of corn waved on the tops of mountains, surely it is not too much to expect that men armed with all the skill and appliance of modern engineering may yet repeat the process. The instance of Malta has been already cited; and, apart from that it is a very dusty world, and soil accumulates as if by magic where man provides for it a place to rest on.

It seems rash in one little qualified for the task to pronounce judgment of any sort on the future of Palestine, yet the conviction that all is not over with the land grows stronger, rather than weaker, with reflection. Renan speaks of "the little kingdom of Israel, which was in the highest degree creative, but did not know how to crown its edifice." Put in another

form, this means that the Holy Land is a land of prophecies unfulfilled or half-fulfilled. But each such prophecy was an inspiration, by which the highest men saw possibilities for the nation, whose conditions the lower men failed to realise or to fulfil. Yet the possibilities were there, as to a great extent they still are there, and, as Coningsby puts it, "the East is a career." As to what those possibilities and that career may actually be, the past history of the land may guide our speculation. Here, as elsewhere, the lines of hope for the future are pointed out by the failures of the past. The failure has been due to bad morality and disloyalty to religious faith; the hope of success lies in ethical and religious regeneration.

Descending from general principles to practical agencies which are at the present time actually working for the future of Palestine, we find that the most conspicuous of these agencies are of two kinds—colonisation and the advance of Western science and commerce. The schemes for colonisation are many, and some of them are strange enough. We may pass by the multitude of religious cranks and faddists who are drawn to the land by fancies involving new schemes for this life and new expectations for the life to come. Apart from these, whose representatives swarm in Palestine, there are two main agencies which count as practical forces.[1] The *Temple Christians* are a body of German colonists who have settled in various parts of

[1] Cf. on this whole subject, Conder's *Tent Work*, ch. xxv.; D. M. Ross's *Cradle of Christianity*, ch. v.; and Laurence Oliphant's *Haifa*.

the land. They hold views as to the fulfilment of prophecy which are not likely to be shared by many; but the spirit of their work and life is eminently practical and full of common sense and self-denying labour. Their colonies are successful up to a certain limit. To come upon one of them is always a refreshing and exhilarating experience. The crops are promising and the products good. There is plenty of water, and it is wisely handled. Wheeled carts have been introduced, and there is a general sense of inventiveness, resource, and energy. Everything speaks of enterprise and of progress, and the life appears to be a happy and delightful one. Yet there is no promise of any solution to the problem of the future here. The limitations of these efforts at colonisation are obvious, and there appears to be a serious lack of that instinct for administration and command which are so essential in any movement aiming at the reconstruction of a national life. The *Jewish Immigration* presents a much larger problem. No one can read pleadings such as Zangwill's without sympathy with the ideal of a Palestine once more inhabited by its ancient people. This extraordinary race is capable of almost anything. When one remembers what it has done for the world, no prophecy of its future seems impossible. No reader of Disraeli's *Tancred* will be likely to forget its forcible reminders of how much Christians owe to Jews. A Hebrew lawgiver has legislated for the world. A Hebrew king is the most popular poet in England (and these Psalms of David helped to win for England the

liberties she so proudly holds). A Hebrew woman gives her name to the grandest church in Paris. A Hebrew man is the accepted revelation of the will of God to the earth; He founded the Church and created Christendom. The persistent vitality with which this race has outlived persecution, kept itself separate from all other races, financed the world, and taken leading places in science, art, literature, politics, and commerce, is one of the most astonishing phenomena of history. Their indomitable conservatism has perhaps a larger promise for their future destinies than the most daring ventures of any democracy. "A race that persist in celebrating their vintage, although they have no fruits to gather, will regain their vineyards." So one would think certainly, and so it may be. Yet it must be confessed that the appearances are hardly promising. The Jews are steadily gathering in Palestine, and vast sums of Jewish money have been spent on their behalf. But, as has been said on a former page, a Jew, subsidised on the sole condition of remaining in the land and being a Jew, seems to degenerate at once into a worthless and even a noxious parasite. Nor have the attempts to organise Jewish agriculture and manufacture in Syria been attended as yet with more than a very partial success.

In contrast with these and similar schemes Colonel Conder pleads the cause of "the sturdy stock of the native Moslem race," and even regards the hope of a bright future for the Fellahin as perhaps not far distant. Under such a "strong, friendly, intelligent native state" he sees the best possible opportunity for the





STUDIES OF SYRIAN PEASANT WOMEN





working out of the religious, strategical, and scientific ideas which find in Syria their special and appropriate field. He longs to see "a wise and honest native government in the place of a decrepit tyranny." Every agency is hampered by the present condition of the government. Until a change has taken place in that, all experiments are but preparatory, and can hope only for the most limited success.

Apart from all colonisation schemes, the encroachment of the West upon the East is very manifest. It is curious, in the light of subsequent events, to recall the prophecies of but a few years ago. Disraeli made his Jew say in Palmerston's time: "Mark me, England will never be satisfied till the people of Jerusalem wear calico turbans." Thackeray's forecast of a day when the scream of the locomotive would awaken the echoes of the Holy Land was no doubt startling enough to some at the time. Yet now the railway has for some years been running among the sacred places. As to the calico, one is surprised and disappointed to see how fashionable that has already become. Many shops in Damascus appear to sell nothing but Manchester cotton goods of the loudest red-and-yellow colours; and it is said that the natives are but too prone to purchase these instead of their own far more beautiful cloth. The invasion of the West is nowhere more striking than at the little hill of Dothan. You journey to it with thoughts of wandering Ishmaelites and the pit where Joseph was imprisoned. Or you remember the wonderful story, with its undying spiritual interest,

of Elisha and his servant standing surrounded by the chariots and horses of the king of Syria ; of the opening of the eyes and the revelation of a fiery bodyguard for the prophet there. What you see when you arrive is a bare and wind-swept hill, flat on the summit and crowned with some poor mud hovels. Along the foot runs for several hundred feet a gigantic cactus hedge enclosing a steam mill under a shed, whose puffing funnel is the most incongruous object imaginable in such a place.

The ends of the earth are already meeting in Palestine. Germany, Russia, Austria, and other countries have sent their colonists ; Italy her priests and monks. Jews arrive from Spain, from Arabia, from Poland. It is by no means uncommon to meet Syrians who have been in America, who have invested the proceeds of their labour in houses better than their neighbours', and who turn to good account the knowledge of English which they have acquired. France has a large stake in Syria—her coinage, her goods, and her fashions being everywhere in evidence.[1] England has made herself familiar there in many ways. Hers is the geographical survey, hers the main part of the tourist enterprise. Her explorers and scientific investigators, her engineers and her merchants, are everywhere. The effect of all this is already apparent in many ways. In the open country things are more stationary, owing to the somewhat primitive habits of the natives. No wooden or metal object of portable dimensions is safe

[1] Her steamers are the largest and the best which visit Beyrout.

from their hands. They stole the iron poles which the surveyors fixed in the Dead Sea ; and the railway sleepers have to be of iron, as wooden ones would be sure to disappear for fuel. The first and most important matter in the progress of civilisation is the construction of roads by which wheeled vehicles can travel. Of these there are throughout the length and breadth of the land only some half-dozen—such as that from Jerusalem to Hebron—connecting towns. In some places, as at Nablus, the beginning of a carriage-road promises much, but suddenly ends a few miles from its starting-point. The fact, however, that a start has been made—and the roads that do exist are of excellent surface—may be taken as a sure prophecy of further progress in the near future. By them, as also by the railway, enterprise has penetrated to the heart of the land. The carpenters' shops in Nazareth are furnished with planes and chisels of the latest European pattern, and as you pass their open doors the scent of new-cut wood is accompanied by the whirr of the turning-lathe. At Jerusalem, beside the Jaffa Gate, a portion of the wall was pulled down on the occasion of the visit of the Emperor of Germany. Just within this gap European shops and hotels (think of "The Grand New Hotel" in large letters opposite the Tower of David!) are seen crowding the open space as if they had streamed in through the breach. Nothing now can stop the flowing tide, and if the tyrannical government of Turkey were relaxed or ended it is questionable whether Syria would remain an oriental country for ten years. What

the political bearings of such a change would be it were still more impossible to prophesy. The whole Eastern question of the future, including the question of the Indian Empire, may very probably lend a strategic importance to the Holy Land which will create a future for it surprisingly different from that expected either by Zionists or Adventists. But of that future who can speak?

The railway and the telegraph have established themselves in the Holy Land, though not without some difficulties. We have already mentioned the reason for the iron sleepers of the railway. In view of such a fact as that, one wonders how it comes to pass that either telegraph posts or wire are allowed to remain uninjured or unstolen. In the early days there seems to have been trouble, and it is said that "one Arab who defiantly struck the wire with his spear was ferreted out and hanged upon the very post he injured." Now they are established facts which take themselves very seriously indeed. The trains omit none of the pomp and circumstance of locomotive travel. The little narrow-gauge railway from Beyrout which intends eventually to get to Tripoli, but at present terminates a few miles up the coast, is a case in point. Its neat little bridges, cuttings, engines, carriages, and what not give one the impression of a toy newly taken from its box. But when we crossed the line a small child was waving a green flag at the crossing with a look of the most ominous sense of danger, more than an hour before the train appeared. A telegraph system is always an





SYRIAN SHEPHERD





impressive thing, giving the sense of stretch and of distance traversed and subdued better than any other invention of modern life. It has been aptly called the nerve-system of the national body, along which the pleasure and pain of the nation thrill to and from its centres. When one sees the wire from the Far East stretching itself right across the enclosure of Jacob's Well to get to its junction with the Western system at Shechem, it is impossible not to feel some rebellion at the intrusion. Nor can anything quite reconcile one to railway travelling in the Holy Land. It seems a sort of sacrilege to view the Plain of Sharon from a railway carriage window, and when the engine whistles in the Vale of Rephaim one starts "like a guilty thing surprised." It is as if you were breaking a commandment and ought to be ashamed. And yet, with all this novelty, the East, at the heart of it, is changeless still. The valleys do not seem aware of the telegraph posts, and in truth these bear little resemblance to the lines of European telegraphs. Once and again, from the evening's camp, we have gazed in astonishment at the crazy, drunken line of wire running out into the sunset, the posts sloping at every imaginable angle, and the wires sagging as only Asiatic wires can sag. The railway, too, almost ceases to be a railway as it whirls you past those indifferent and statuesque figures of shepherds in the fields. Its rails are often deep in grass, and are all but invisible as you look back along the green track. Even Damascus, with its two railway stations, hardly seems to have suffered serious alteration. Your first moment of arrival shocks you

with a babel of shouting hotel-porters and the familiar bustle over tickets, luggage, and cabs; but two minutes' drive sends you back a thousand years into the immovable life of the oldest city in the world. No doubt it is undergoing a secret change, which will one day appear; but in the meantime, to the observer of outward appearances, the railway is a mere detail, and of no more account than a Damascus table in an English drawing-room.

Interesting and important as all this advance of Western progress is, it is not from it that the resurrection of the Holy Land must be expected. There, as elsewhere, the chief danger of the present time is that of godless civilisation, whose purely secular and materialistic prosperity may prove to be more of a curse than a blessing after all. An incident of recent occurrence, related publicly on good authority, may illustrate the truth of this. A man had sunk in a dying condition in a Syrian street, right opposite the telegraph office. The officials removed him to a neighbouring dust-heap, saying, "You are not allowed to die here, this is government property." Not even the telegraph office can secure a future of any real stability or greatness for a land if that be the spirit of it.

When we sought for an explanation of the misery of Palestine we were thrown back on the ethical aspect of the case. Had the land been faithful to her high calling her story would have been very different. Never was a country honoured with so lofty a trust as hers; never did a country so often betray her trust. This



JERUSALEM.—THE TRIPLE GATE OF THE TEMPLE AREA

This gate is towards the eastern end of the Southern Wall, and led into the vaulted substructures of the southern part of the Temple Area, which appear to have been reconstructed in Mediæval times. One of the colossal drafted stones, generally attributed to the time of Herod and possibly dating from the age of Solomon, will be noticed as forming part of the western jamb of the westernmost doorway. Here the doorways originally built upon the rock are hidden only by a few feet of soil; but at the south-eastern corner, a hundred yards farther east, the *débris* has accumulated to a height of 77 feet; adding to this the height of the wall now visible (74 feet), the total original height at this point must have been no less than 150 feet.

This is the only portion of ground immediately under the walls of Jerusalem which is under cultivation. Here, as elsewhere near the walls, the surface is of a light ashen colour, which takes a rich purple tint in shadow at sunset.

The farther hill is the Mount of Olives with the Russian Monastery on its summit.





was the despair of her ancient lawgiver, and the burden of her later prophets. When Christ came to her, she knew no better thing to do with Him than to break His heart and to crucify Him on Calvary. Within the century Jerusalem was crucified in turn ; and soon a Christian Syria took the place of the perished Judaism. That in its turn decayed. Its creed became artificial, its spirit effeminate, and its morality corrupt. The spirit of Christianity had sunk so low in Palestine before the Mussulman occupation as to manifest its zeal by using every effort to defile that part of the Temple area which they regarded as the Jewish Holy of Holies. The young faith of Islam, fresh and vigorous, and not as yet embittered, made an easy conquest of the effete religion, which has lived since then on sufferance, lamenting its sufferings, but never realising its desert of them. To this day the Christian travelling in Syria is oppressed by the sense of its desertion. Christ has forsaken the desolate shores of the Sea of Galilee. He walks no more in the streets of Jerusalem. It is the old story—" They besought Him that he would depart out of their coasts, and He entered into a ship, and passed over and came unto His own city."

Yet somehow it is impossible to believe that He has gone from the land of His earthly home for ever. An incident which occurred to us in Damascus dwells in our memory with prophetic significance. We had visited the Great Mosque, which rose upon the ruins of an ancient Christian church. The original walls were not entirely demolished, and among the parts built into

the new structure was a beautiful gate on whose lintel may still be deciphered the Greek inscription, "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." To see this inscription we climbed a ladder in the Jewellers' Bazaar. At the height of some fifteen feet we stepped upon a ledge of rather precarious masonry, and after a short scramble along this came to the lintel, half concealed by a rubble wall running diagonally across it. A stranger was with us, a devout Christian from a town far south of Damascus. In the whole city nothing moved him so deeply as this stone, and he exclaimed, "It was the Christians' fault — they were so rough, so rude, so ignorant—it was done by the wish of God—*but He will have it again.*" And He *will* have it again, sooner or later! When Omar heard that Mohammed was dead he would not believe it, but proclaimed in the Mosque of Medina, "The Prophet has only swooned away!" But Mohammed had died, and it is his dead hand that has held the land these thirteen centuries. Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; and the future of the land lies with Christ. To the Western world He has fulfilled His tremendous claim, "I am the resurrection and the life," not only in the hope of immortality, but in the spring and impulse which His faith has given to national ideals. It is impossible not to hope for a fulfilment of the promise to the land where it was first spoken. Looking down from Tabor upon the hill of Dûhy, one has sight of Endor to the east, while Shunem lies just round the



A MINARET IN THE NORTH-WESTERN CORNER OF THE TEMPLE AREA

This, which is the most elegant of the minarets of Jerusalem, apparently belongs to the neighbouring Dervish Monastery.

The roof in the right foreground is part of the Turkish barracks adjoining the north-west side of the Temple Area. The windows immediately to the left look into the Haram (or Temple) Area. The two domes and tower above them belong to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Early morning light.





western slope, and between them is the village of Nain. It is as if that hill were a sanctuary from Death, where the grave could not hold its own. Palestine holds in trust for the world those empty graves, and one grave above all others from which He Himself came forth. Surely she, too, will rise, by His grace, in a faith and character purer than those which she has lost.

It is but a curious coincidence, and yet surely it is one worth recording, that in the sacred places of Mohammedan worship several Christian symbols have been permitted to remain. Women at Mecca have been seen wearing as a precious amulet a Venetian coin bearing the images of Christ and of St. Mark. In the Tomb of Saladin at Damascus there hangs a cross depending from the wreath presented by the Emperor of Germany. In the Mosque of Omar mosaics of the tenth or eleventh centuries represent grapes and ears of corn, which are supposed to have been meant by the Byzantine artists as symbols of the Last Supper; and on one of the capitals of the same period a cross is said to have been carved. In the Mosque at Damascus, which still preserves the name of the forerunner of Christ, two representations of the cup of the Holy Supper are to be seen on bronze gates; one of the minarets is still called by the name of Jesus, and that prophetic lintel which we have already described is built into the wall.

What these chance relics vaguely hint is finding its manifest fulfilment in the Christian missions of

Syria. It was our privilege to visit several of these in various parts of the country.[1] Our introduction to the land was given us by the kind and hospitable Friends of the Brummana Quaker Mission in the Lebanon. Afterwards at Beyrout, Jaffa, Jerusalem, Hebron, Nablus, Nazareth, Tiberias, Damascus, Tyre, and Sidon, we saw as we journeyed something of what is being done by many churches and societies. The operations and methods in these and other centres are very various, but the most promising are the medical and educational missions, with their colleges and schools, hospitals and dispensaries.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the impression which these glimpses into missionary work produced. Until one has seen it on the spot one does not in the least degree realise what an actual power it is. Its results cannot be tabulated. This applies to the educational missions, but still more to the medical missions. It must be remembered that the words are still true. "It is almost impossible in the present state of affairs for a Jew to confess Christ openly, unless he is willing . . . to run the risk of starvation and even death." Seven years ago a scheme was advocated for the formation of a company like the African Lakes Company, though on a much smaller scale, which might provide the means of livelihood to Christian converts. Nothing could be more obviously necessary. In Syria the Christian teacher has not only to make the adoption of Christianity

[1] Before we had even landed, church bells were sounding to us from Beyrout across the water.



SYRIAN PEASANT WITH MILK VESSELS





attractive to Jews and Mohammedans, he has to make it *possible.* Until some such course as this is followed, it will be absolutely unreasonable to demand results in the form of avowed conversions. Christianity will remain meanwhile a secret and incalculable leaven, and it may be expected, as a Moslem said of India, that a great many Christians will rise out of Mohammedan graves. While this is the state of matters, it is quite obvious that the Christian work which is done must offer something specially intelligible and undeniable in the way of help to men. In a land of uncured disease and fantastic medicine, nothing could do this so well as medical work. The monasteries provide shelter and hospitality for the traveller, but it is offered almost exclusively to strangers. The educational missions meet a demand which is increasing, but which is keenly felt only by the more intelligent. It is the medical missionary who is understood and valued by all sorts and conditions of men.

We have already described at considerable length the sadness of Palestine. As you journey from place to place the impression deepens. Sores, exposed and fly-blown, intrude themselves into the memory of many a wayside and city street. The dirt and stench of the houses make the sunshine terrible. After weeks of travel the feeling of a sick land has deepened upon you until it has become an oppression weighing daily upon your heart. Suddenly you emerge in a mission-station, and an indescribable feeling of relief possesses you. There is at last a sound of joy and health.

These are the spots of brightness in a very grey landscape, little centres of life in a land where so much is morbid. The visiting of sacred places would be the most selfish of religious sentimentalities if it were done without a painful sense of helplessness against the misery that surrounds them. The only thing that turns pity into hope in Palestine is the mission-work that is being done there. No one can see that work without being filled with an altogether new enthusiasm for missions. Across the sea, one believes in them as a part of Christian duty and custom. On the spot, one thanks God for them as almost unearthly revelations of "sweetness and cleanness, abundance, power to bless, and Christian love in that loveless land." Teachers, doctors, nurses — every one about the place — seem bright and strong. The teacher may have to stand for hours daily in a close and wholly inadequate room; the surgeon to perform thirty serious operations weekly, and to interview 300 outdoor patients. But the work is quietly done with purposeful and business-like competence, and with a good humour that almost conceals its self-denial. All manner of people are there —children of rabbis and little waifs of the street, the village sheikh and the beggar-girl. No part of the work is more impressive than its gracious help for women. In all parts of the land their hard lot moves one's pity. In the fields they toil all day long under the burning sun. In the villages, they sit in the foul streets engaged in the filthiest of labour. In the hospital they are women again. Simple and merry,





SYRIAN WOMEN AT A FOUNTAIN





grateful for all kindness, and quick of eye and hand, they will return to their hard life with at least the memory of something better. The pictures on the walls, the clean and sweet rooms, the spotless linen, the kindly touches, the good fellowship of friends—all these have spoken to their hearts, and the message will not be all forgotten.

It is in this field that one can look with confidence for the resurrection of Syria. One cannot wonder, indeed, that here God found His Cross in man. Yet one understands also how it was that here God made His central attack upon the sin and sorrow of the world. There could have been no better place, for here there is so much of both, and yet deliverance is so possible, the response to repentance being so immediate, and so wonderfully fruitful. The Divine battle is still going on. Missions in every quarter are fighting disease and death and sin and ignorance, in Christ's name, and the glad uplift of spirit that everywhere follows their work is bringing Him back to the heart of the land which had forgotten Him. The names of Christian missionaries are imperial names in the Far East. It is, indeed, an empire of hearts, and its coming is not with observation. But of its reality and power there can be no question even now, and its sway is extending year by year. To those whose Syrian travels have given them the vivid imagination, vivid almost as memory, of the real fact of Christ in the past, this fact of Christ in the present is as welcome as it is evident. They feel, and the East too is feeling, that the Great Healer still goes

about the land doing good. The future, whatever its political course may be, is religiously full of hope. It may take time—God only knows how long it will take. The ancient miracles of Christ did not reveal the Healer to the world in a day. Yet quietly and out of sight, the East is learning that Christ is indeed the Healer of mankind. It does not as yet confess this, even to itself. But the hearts of many sufferers know it, and every Christian knows that certainly " He will have it again."

Index

Index



Printed by R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, *Edinburgh.*

P.T.O.





